
Modes of Existence, Modes of Exhaustion [1]

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I

Our era revolves around this pathology: market-ready modes of existence. Part of the contemporary effort is to diagnose this illness and retrace its genesis, ramifications, and effects. Among them is the daily rejection of “minor” modes of life that are not only more fragile, precarious, and vulnerable (poor, crazy, autistic), but also more hesitant, dissident, and at times more traditional than others (Indigenous people); that are, on the contrary, still being born, tentative, even experimental (to be discovered, invented). There is a war between different modes of life or forms of life today. Perhaps this is what has led some philosophers recently to dwell on such atypical modes of existence, even if they pertain to a bygone era: the Franciscans in Agamben, the Cynics in Michel Foucault, the schizos in Gilles Deleuze-Félix Guattari, the autistic in Ferdinand Deligny, but also the Araweté in Eduardo Viveiros de Castro or even the fireflies in Georges Didi-Huberman. This is the zigzagging line of inquiry that in the last decades has been crossing the philosophical, anthropological, subjective, and aesthetic domains, challenging our political imagination.

Questions arise from the clues in these observations:

What is a form of life, or a mode of existence?

How might the plurality of modes of existence and forms of life be made visible? Assuming that a mode of existence constitutes a “world,” with its own “duration” and singular “subjectivity,” what does it mean, in concrete terms, for different “worlds,” divergent “subjectivities,” distinct “durations” to coexist or collide?

What type of pluralism and perspectivism is demanded or imposed by such a challenge? Which processes of subjectivation and desubjectivation are created through these frictions?

How do such singular temporalities manifest themselves in an aesthetic apparatus such as a theatre company composed by so-called schizophrenics, as Ueinzz Theater Company?

Which frontiers does such an apparatus shuffle beyond the already established ones, like those between madness/sanity, individual/collective, subjective/scenic, art/life? Wouldn't we need to rethink the doublets: construction/unfolding, force/fragility, exhaustion/creation, impossibility/invention?

How does this miniature experience that is Ueinzz flow over its delimited contour and establish a connection with other theoretical, aesthetic, micropolitical, macropolitical experiences? And how does it contribute towards a cartography of contemporary existence, exhaustion, sensibility and its mutations?

II

Many of these questions came to the fore when, some years ago, I came upon Fernand Deligny's work. He was an unclassifiable conjuror who engaged for years in daring experimentation with the autistic, at the margins of institutions. He went against the grain of practices prevalent in the late 1960s, be they psychiatric or psychoanalytic, pedagogical or simply institutional. During a brief period at La Borde's clinic in France, where he met Guattari, he grew dissatisfied with its treatment practices, notwithstanding the novelty of institutional psychotherapy, treating the institution before being able to treat patients. Deligny left and adopted an autistic child, christening him Janmaire, and moved to the Cévennes region. There he started a unique mode of communal living and coexistence with autistic children, in the company of adults not specialized in this area – where what he later called the "tentative" was born. The tentative is not a project, an institution, a program, a doctrine, or a utopia. It's something fragile and persistent, comparable to a mushroom in the plant kingdom. Eluding ideologies, norms, moral imperatives, it can only survive if it doesn't establish a finality. This tentative has no purpose, I refer to the tentative that can rely on habit, which can favour the *inadvertent*, the *event*: together with the autistic and in open air, cooking, washing dishes, chopping firewood, baking bread, putting the goats out to graze, were all part of a basic and *customary* routine. Amid that reiteration of the everyday, the drifts, wanderings, and irruptions appear, the unique gestures where each individual can take initiative to trace unexpected lines. A tentative is comparable to a raft. Pieces of wood are loosely joined together so that when the waves come, the water can cut across the gaps between the logs and avoid turning over. The raft is not a barricade, but "with all that was left of the barricades, rafts could be built" (Deligny 2007: 23).

The autistic person is defined by the vacancy in spoken language, and to some that is what he/she lacks for reasons several branches of psychiatry or psychoanalysis must explain in their own way; surprisingly, none of that interests Deligny. For him, the entire problem lies in how to prevent language from killing. By saying

“that boy,” one already produces identity. How can one allow the individual to exist without imposing the He, the Subject, the Him, that whole series that we ascribe to individuals? Deligny is convinced that we stand before an individual in rupture of the subject. Through the empire of language, we always feel impelled to convey order-words and to emit signs. In this way, we create an Inside of communication, signals, signs, and language. Deligny maintains that autistic people aren’t Inside that circle, and the question is not about sticking them in there. One could say that Deligny is prejudiced against language as bearer of meaning, finality, project, output. Autism, at the opposite end of language, allows for the evacuation of finality, its tyranny. The strength of that idea is remarkable: art is for nothing, and politics makes projects; here too, art would place itself at the level of “for nothing.” What is always in question for Deligny is not the Whole, but the rest.... Power wants the Whole, it gets exasperated, it makes inventories of being and having, of the yes and the no, while Deligny thinks for the elusive, the refractory, in a “milieu” that only just allows one to exist.

The extent to which all of this fascinated me isn’t surprising given the years of experience amid the Ueinz Theatre Company. For better or for worse, some of these traces were present, despite the schizophrenic world being very different from the autistic world, beginning with the presence of language in the former, if somewhat subverted, derailed, decoded. But it was also important for us that language didn’t convey order-words, that we didn’t submit to a blind productivity, to a capitalization of existence, and that we remained at the level of the “tentative,” the raft, the open, in order to give way to the inadvertent, irruption, gestures, following the erratic (wander) lines. We can even sustain a temporary finality—to put together and perform a theatrical piece—but that shouldn’t predetermine anything. The whole challenge is to be at the service of something we don’t know, can’t anticipate or predict. We must place ourselves in the present without hoping to “entertain” or “fulfil,” without the fear of “nothing happening”—the dreaded scene of any supervisor, animator, entertainer, businessman, cultural agent, for whom everything always has to be filled in; the show must go on.

As La Borde director Jean Oury highlights, along with Guattari, that is the condition for something to happen – nothing “must” happen – since it’s precisely when something must happen that the most impalpable happenings run the risk of being aborted. In the end, what is it really that matters? What can be seen? What is produced? What takes place in the interstices? What lies in a state of almost being? What escapes? What is lived in a state of exhaustion? And what community is this one, which doesn’t necessarily produce theatrical pieces, which doesn’t necessarily need to show any piece, which doesn’t necessarily find itself in the piece it makes?

III

Some years ago we were invited into a joint project by the artistic/political collectives mollecular.org from Finland and presqueruines from France. The project consisted of crossing the Atlantic on a cruise from Lisbon to Santos, where we were supposed to put together and perform a piece inspired by Kafka’s *Amerika*, as well as to make a film. A luxurious cruiseliner conceived for unending consumption, uninterrupted entertainment, and continuous feasting left no space for anything: mental, psychic, physical saturation, a pleasure-seeking semiotic bombardment where nothing, precisely, could “happen.” There was no way to create one’s own space, to subtract oneself from the cruise’s frenetic rhythm in order to put together a theatrical piece amid the interminable programme and infinity on offer. As Deleuze would say, the possible has been exhausted.

At a certain moment, Erika Alvarez Inforsato, one of the coordinators, decided to read passages from her doctoral thesis in our rehearsal room. She explained, among other things, what travelling with this group meant to her. In one of the most beautiful parts, entitled “Unworking: Clinical and political constellations of the common,” the author exposed, within the context of her work, the Blanchotian idea of *unworking* or inoperativeness (*désœuvrement*), which with great precision

designated something that was being lived by many at that moment: a sort of resistance in “making a piece” amid the foul, unworldly production of the cruise. A set of impossibilities began to open up, however paradoxically, towards a common happening, towards running the risk of concluding that nothing happened. Nothing, that there is no piece, but that in that absence of a piece something from a common order was able to happen. “A community for the art of not making work,” said Inforsato, resisting prescriptive dynamics—to sustain suspension, the drift, to leave the field open instead of betting on edifications.

We had lost many things along the way: senses, hierarchies, projects, certainties, securities—including our director. Those may be the best moments to “think.” Not in order to think an “object,” but to ask oneself: Why sustain a group such as this, which experiments with something of the order of the unliveable, perhaps of the useless, and through which, after all, one tries to breathe precisely in an unbreathable environment? Again, Deligny: for nothing, in order that something may erupt. Or again Deleuze: In the depth of exhaustion, when nothing else remains, there arises the “pure image,” an intensity that stands “apart from words, stories, and memories, [and] accumulates a fantastic potential energy, which it detonates by dissipating itself.” The philosopher adds: “What counts in the image is not its meagre content, but the energy—mad and ready to explode” (Deleuze 1997: 160).

I can’t avoid a personal statement. It has to do with an old habit, a sort of secret, almost inadmissible pleasure: to arrive at the rehearsal, lie down on the floor, close my eyes and give into a sort of disappearance. As if I could leave myself and abandon that character which at times sticks to my skin (the teacher, the author, the philosopher, the coordinator), deserting the regime of requests, obligations, interactions, interactivities, and activities. To be nothing, no one, to-be-for-nothing, not-being, almost-being, quitting, taking a rest from myself, unmaking the I, just fluctuating like an incorporeal outpour. That is where I am sometimes, potentially, visited by exploding images. Enrique Villa-Matas wrote a novel in which he relates how he decided to disappear. But deep down, he checked his e-

mail every day to verify if his friends had realized he had disappeared, if they were looking for him, if he was missed. That is, it was the opposite of any such disappearance. It was an inspection of his presence in the world. Now, the opposite was happening to me there. But what I felt amid the group was only possible with those people, in that Ueinz atmosphere with its warmth, support, anarchy, and voices—a network of connections where disconnection is allowed, legitimate, and part of it. I found out that the directors became restless and at times angry with that apparently passive, unconnected, useless attitude. This was from the perspective of a performance, the putting together of a piece and theatrical challenges. But I wasn't giving in. One cannot die in any old place. If I did that at the university I would get fired or hospitalized, if I did that in the street I would be taken in, at home or alone it wouldn't be possible. To die for some time knowing there is the buzz of life around—that's what allowed me to "let go." We've lost our right to die, to disappear, to disconnect, to subtract ourselves from the imperatives of communication or interlocution or reciprocity. The tyranny of sociality—socialitarianism—it's one of our century's plagues against which Deligny protested like a visionary, preaching silent contiguity, not noiseocracy, not "reciprocation" (the "eye to eye" that autistic people can't stand, the question-answer from which the vacancy of spoken language protects them). Therein lies a regime of coexistence in which it isn't necessary to guarantee fulfilment, continuity, accumulation. But it is precisely because one can die that one can live, because nothing needs to happen, something may happen. That an actor leaving a rehearsal is jokingly approached by an actress, "Do you have permission to leave? Have you signed the form?" And that the dialogue can become the involuntary seed of a Kafkaesque scene in which for each movement each person is made to fill in a form with their details. Life becomes, precisely, an incessant filling in of details, and everywhere we are urged to account for everything. Here's a scene that arises from chance at that precise moment, gaining strength in the process of putting together a Kafka-inspired piece, and which attunes with humour to the generalized bureaucratization, digitization, and codification of contemporary existence.

IV

Perhaps what is at play in this series I've just exposed, from the right to die and to disconnect to the obligation of accounting for everything, relates to Maurizio Lazzarato's (2014) recent thoughts on the notion of demobilization. We know political mobilization, with all its imperative courtship: a state of alert, connection, availability, activism, and submission. Now, as paradoxical as it may seem, since Jünger's *Total Mobilization* written in the 1930s, where he reported a new state of the world where all of man's and Earth's energies were in constant mobilization, whether in capitalism, communism (and afterwards, Nazism), for war or production purposes, minor voices plead for a pause, a suspension, an interruption, a break on the blind train of infinite progress. That's true for Walter Benjamin, but also for Paul Virilio or Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. Hence Lazzarato's insistence on articulating a political mobilization in tandem with civilizational demobilization, a deceleration, or only a change in the quality of movement, as Brian Massumi put it, so that the political mobilization won't mirror the degree of arrest and vampirism of the available energies imposed by the prevailing regime. In my view, Deligny functioned entirely within that register, in his refusal of wanting to include, socialize, entertain, reciprocate, cure, and make productive the autistic people he looked after. That refusal didn't imply political resignation. Deligny was a longstanding member of the Communist Party, as paradoxical as that may seem. He was radically critical of all institutions of enclosure with which he lived during the war and, more broadly, with a civilization that produced war, enclosure, and the people capable of this. For Deligny, a civilization that obliges us to *do* all the time stands against his injunction to *act*, which is devoid of utility and finality. Remember the filmmaker Straub's phrase: "The present moment, that is stolen from us in the name of progress, this fleeting present is irreplaceable ... we are ransacking human feelings as we ransack the planet, and the price we ask people to pay for progress or for well-being is too high, and unjustifiable" (Albera 2001). Hence the curious conception about what constitutes a political film for him. "The militant film captivates people

with a sense of urgency again. And urgency is the result of the system that invented gas chambers.”

Another time would be necessary, a time not pressed by urgency. So that something different might occur which isn't the mere realization of the previously established finality, be it sinister or progressive. Drifts, errors, erring are necessary and need space to occur. On the maps that Deligny suggested to be drawn at the end of each day, there were the *customary lines* (habitual routes) and the *wander lines* (where something inadvertent had happened, a new gesture such as a walk to a spring, a stop by a specific point). Nothing was induced or imposed: to accompany, not to drive.

After the abovementioned cruise, we felt disorientated, estranged in the absence of our director. Between abandonment and relief we literally jumped from the ship onto the raft. From the project to the tentative. From the monocratic direction to sustained anarchy. The idea was not to substitute the director, to fill in the void and put together what was left in fragments, but to navigate this new chaos, where the most disparate voices met with grumblings about the need for a conductor. Amid ideas for outrageous pieces someone would ask if the group would end. The shipwreck feeling materialized in a subsequent piece, where a ship in angry waters tumbles and all aboard are launched into the sea. However, in the sequence they wake up as sheep bleating helplessly.

If those shipwrecked turned into sheep as they looked for a shepherd, a leader, a king (a director?), ultimately they conceived something else: a thought. Instead of a chief, thoughts. Among many other things, the theatrical piece dramatized our mourning for the director, in addition to the idea itself of having a director. Deleuze and Guattari enunciated a formula to describe that new logic: $n-1$. n represents any multiplicity (for instance, actors) and 1 is the instance that overcodes the multiplicity thereby placing itself at the centre (ie. a director). But the same applies to everything: on one side, people (multitude), on the other side, a representative of capture and centralization (a pope, a president, a leader, a

doctrine, an order-word, God, Oedipus, Capital, the Signifier, Progress). The One that transcends that multiplicity is subtracted, returning it to its horizontal, immanent dimension. A publishing house I founded with other partners was called *n-1* publications, taking its inspiration from this phrase in *A Thousand Plateaus*: “In truth, it is not enough to say, ‘Long live the multiple,’ difficult as it is to raise that cry... The multiple must be made... always *n-1*... Subtract the unique from the multiplicity to be constituted; write at *n-1* dimensions” (1987: 6). Not by chance, the editorial and theatrical line got crossed.

I can’t deny that twenty years ago, at the beginning of that theatrical experience, when I considered myself the “coordinator” (a sort of 1 together with the directors), I had an active presence. In recent years I started to retire from that function, or I was gradually removed from it. It could now circulate, pulverize, or simply self-dilute, in favour of a more mobile or dissolute composition. This *n-1* operation corresponded to a kind of desubjectivation, where we abandon the identity cloak which had identified us. Perhaps this is a condition for a new collective composition less centered on the Subject, on the I, on intersubjectivity, and more open to connections of a different order. Not by chance one of the strongest moments of the piece *Quay of Sheep* (later rechristened *Sheep Chaos*) was the birth of an enormous bundle of red yarn that little by little spread out connecting to all in an entanglement akin to the work of Lygia Clark: mobile and rhizomatic, formed by threads, bodies, and movements, like a collective body born of a thought.

V

After several performances of *Quay of Sheep*, we found ourselves in limbo again. Exhausted. We didn’t know what, if anything, could occur. Many images popped up, several lines, exhaustive and at times insipid laboratories. During that period, Rodrigo arrived. He used to carry a little notebook hanging around his neck, and, apparently, had written many books (he’s currently writing one called *To Talk or to Listen, that is the Question*). Excited by the idea he might become an actor in a

“true” piece, he manifested the desire to put together the story of Adam and Eve. Much later he brought a helmet with wires and electrodes capable of a “sidereal connection.” He had dozens of those helmets in his house, each in a different colour or style. In any case, it was off-season during which everything still felt uncertain and our rehearsals didn’t point to any particularly defined line. Collazzi, our narrator, and one of our oldest actors, had brought up a carriage that reached the sky on its way to the stars. So we improvised a spatial voyage inside a time tunnel; Collazzi sketched a science-fiction story with a biblical backdrop. [2]

In 2013 the opportunity arrived to present a project for a cultural institution. It was a chance to get more consistent financial support for the first time in many years. For a whole year, it would allow actors to receive monthly payment. We thought of elaborating on a project inspired by Deligny. On a previous trip to France I had visited the archive of the Institut Mémoires de l’édition contemporaine (IMEC), situated at the Abbaye d’Ardenne in France, where I researched the correspondence between Deligny and Guattari. I found fifty-seven letters from Deligny, and only one answer from Guattari (the others are not in the archive). I was quite surprised when I came upon a sketch, in one of the letters, of a theatre piece or film that Deligny planned to set up. At the time Guattari had a house in Saint-Étienne-de-Gourgas made available to all sorts of collective initiatives and projects. Deligny’s script described a situation in which there are more actors than roles in a troupe. That is, there wouldn’t be enough costumes for all. Divided in two groups, the Gours and the Gasses, the Gours were those who were able to get into the skin of a character, and the Gasses “those who are capable of nothing: not even (to be) a character, nor a policeman, nor a thief, nor a priest, nor a prisoner... nor man, nor woman: afflicted souls, individuals who, without having entered the skin of a subject, are left with no project, they are redundant, they’re worse than nothing, worse than the mob.” Hence, the Gours rehearse while the Gasses err, idly, in discontent. But all those who were Gours at one point will eventually be Gasses.

The idea that there are more people than roles seemed to me frighteningly strong and simple. Isn't it what we see all the time around every corner, whether we think of the distribution of wealth, jobs, or natural resources in a city or in the world at large? One part of the population is expendable; it's useless even to serve, and in those extreme situations must be exterminated. When Lazzarato writes that the artistic act becomes resistance as long as there is transversality between the molecular action of rupture and composition in a specific domain and in macropolitical domains, we can't help but agree and situate ourselves on that horizon where the micro and macro resonate (2014: 15-16). As Guattari asks in another context: "Will the revolution that is coming elaborate its principles from something said by Lautréamont, Kafka or Joyce?" (Guattari 2015: 275) We would add: from something stated in Deligny's script, by the unreasonable, foolish, by the schizo or the autistic, or even by the diverse devices capable of giving them a voice?

So we decided to promise to make a piece inspired by Deligny. We added an additional event in which his editor Sandra Álvarez de Toledo projected films by or about Deligny. There was an exhibition with several maps produced by his collaborators throughout the years, and a parallel publication of one of his books (*The Arachnean*, by n-1 publications) – in other words, a sort of Deligny occupation. Finally, the project was approved.

But how could we imagine that this group, with its inventiveness and its capacity for improvisation and skewed appropriation, could fully obey a script without distorting it completely? When we brought the idea of the Gours and the Gasses to the group, what came back was Adam and Eve, the sidereal connection. Little by little, what unfolded was no less than a Story of the World, from the Big Bang to the final Destruction of humanity, planet Earth and the World itself. (At the time Viveiros de Castro and Deborah Danowski's book, *Há mundo por vir?* [now translated as *The Ends of the World*] had just come out, condemning our progress-oriented civilization that sought endless accumulation and the depletion and exhaustion of natural resources, putting an end to living conditions on the planet).

Amid such thematic expansion several planets began to emerge in the rehearsals, as if the actors manifested a counterargument vis-à-vis Deligny's script: there weren't enough roles for all *in this world*, but why deny the possibility of there being *other worlds*, where everyone had a role? Even in this world of ours, everything multiplied. Yes, there would be Adam and Eve, but not *an* Adam and *an* Eve, rather *many* Eves and Adams. The binary itself of gender was broken, since Adam became Eve or vice versa.

The initial synopsis of that last theatrical piece was: "There isn't enough space for all people in the world. Some people live in limbo, between walls, others were thrown into the sea. A small group decides to board a ship in search of other worlds, of possibles, zero gravity... Utopia, evasion or lucidity?"

There were all sorts of made-up planets. One of them came up via Luiz, an actor that in the play repeated the word *Klonoa*, taken from a mobile phone game. It was suggested he follow a line stretched between apples thrown on the ground by the Eves. From that point on he would turn into the Klonoa planet, around which the group would orbit. On another occasion, the actor Onés, during a song, solitary, made an encyclopaedic speech on the birth of the stars. Paula read a Calvino story where a character repeated, "that is not to be explained." Both fragments came together in a scene in which Onés gave a sort of master class about the birth of the stars. To the unanswered questions she would respond: "That is not to be explained." That scene changed because Onés felt assaulted by her comment since after all "everything has an explanation."

Rodrigo spoke a lot about a crazy physiology: some very extravagant theories on the drop of neurons, the forces that circulate through the body, etc. He decided to study biomedicine. In one rehearsal, after a conversation with Paula who is a doctor, he experimented with being a doctor/shaman. Thus, one of the planets that the spatial explorers from *Gravity Zero* would explore, in their expeditions, was full of the sick and moribund. It was the doctor/shaman's task, along with an assistant, to ask what they suffered from (answers ranged from "infinity vertigo"

to “merchandise illness”), then to instantly attribute a bizarre diagnostic (“spatialitis” or “infiniteitis”) and place a helmet filled with wires and electrodes on the sufferer’s heart as in shock therapy. But on that planet, instead of shock therapy, each patient received a shamanic treatment based on contact with luminous stones, gestures, and magical words, ultimately from indigenous languages. In one of the performances I was a sick person. When asked who I was, I quite suddenly came up with the answer, “God.” And what’s your sickness? “I am losing my powers.” They tried to heal me, but in vain. God died. “God is long gone,” they ascertained.

Deep down, we should take all that happened in that theatrical mode quite seriously: in a world where God is dead and can no longer guarantee its unity, not even if ours is the best of all possible worlds, as Leibniz would say, we could inhabit many worlds. Not a universe, but a pluriverse, Deleuze would offer.

Collazzi who was already quite elderly died in the process of creating the piece. He was our most inspired narrator, who for years lived as if he were to die each day, repeating every morning that he was exhausted, going through every day as if it was a Herculean task. As a narrator, with a quivering voice, he would bring forth some of our world’s most abyssal tremors. This is how I came to be entrusted to read that piece’s prologue in his place:

At the beginning there was Chaos, Tohu Vavohu. The Earth was formless and void. Darkness was over the surface of the abyss, and the spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Only sparks crossed the darkness – luminous rays, explosions, implosions, abysses, waters floating everywhere... Then God said, Let there be Light, and there was Light; God said, Let there be a firmament to divide the waters from the waters, and there was firmament; God said, Let there be land and there was land; God said, let there be fish, animals and birds; God said, Let Us make man in Our image and likeness. And God created man and woman. And God saw that it was good. And he put man and woman in Heaven, but forbid them to touch the fruit of wisdom. But Adam and Eve ate the apple and discovered transgression and freedom. They discovered the pleasure

of disobedience, the lust of insubordination, nudity and shame, desire and the sublime sins, murder and sacrilege, punishment and escape, heresy and delight. And they realized that the Earth was not only inhabited by man and woman. There were Gay Adams and Lesbian Eves, Bisexuals, Transexuals, Transgenders, Countersexuals, there were all sorts. And just as the world wasn't divided only between men and women, it also wasn't divided between the mad and the sane, the good and the bad, the quick and the fast, black and white, intelligent and dim, modern and primitive, brutal and sensitive, São Paulo fans and Corinthians fans. Deep down, everything was a lot more mixed up than what he had led them to believe. They also discovered that not only Earth was inhabited and inhabitable. They felt free to search for other planets, to build powerful spaceships, to cross the universe from one end to the other. And they discovered that not only this universe exists. So they started visiting other worlds, parallel worlds, virtual worlds, impossible worlds, impossible worlds. And they started seeing other gods which are less vain or vengeful or exclusive than Abraham's God, Greek gods, Roman gods, Indian gods, Egyptian gods, tupiniquim deities, yanomami entities. And they envisioned many other spirits roaming their surroundings. Minute, luminous, shimmering beings with small dicks would fall from the sky like silver rain, dancing gaily around them, once more populating the world and helping them to heal the sick. Men discovered that even though banished from Paradise, or precisely because of that, they were capable of multiple ecstasies and delightful mysteries, unutterable crimes and numinous solidarities, zero gravity and sidereal joys.

As Erika has expressed, this reasonably connected prologue gives the spectator the illusion of a cohesive narrative, which frees him to enjoy what will come without worrying about "understanding" anything, since there is nothing to understand. This is where the true theatrical adventure begins, when one lets go of comprehension in order to enter another sphere, a mode of affectation, of multiple worlds and multiple times.

VI

At the end of 2016, we were invited to Amsterdam to present this piece at *If I Can't Dance I Don't Want to Be Part of Your Revolution*. Our ten-day stay was an adventure of incredible intensity thanks to the hospitality of our hosts, the relationships we forged with the welcome team and other artists, and the entire dynamic that such a trip implies. The company had been on several tours in the past: in addition to traveling in Brazil, we went to Finland, Scotland, Germany, France, and Portugal. Of course, the excitement, the emotion and the traveling itself will inevitably intensify certain aspects of the supposedly most banal everyday nature: anxiety, stress, fear, risks, possibly crises, collapse, exhaustion, everything that constitutes the groundless ground that we are facing at every moment in this project, all the more on an international tour. Between acceleration and paralysis, success and failure, presence and absence, always just about to flourish or implode. Everything happens at the edge of the abyss. We are used to it and, yet, we're are living always on razor's edge.

Here is just the latest example of this. Alexandre Bernardes is known as the "founder" of our company. He's the one who suggested that we do theatre when we were still inside a day hospital two decades ago. With a considerable psychiatric record, he was a raw thinker who never stopped asking himself and everyone he met the most vital questions. Who is alive? What about the poor? Who will survive the current wars? Why does she not like me? Let's make love! And what about machine domination? Are you sleeping well? With his exuberant libido and a strong tendency for head-on confrontations, his poetic terrorism did not leave anybody indifferent. Sometimes he would kiss a stranger on the mouth or he would lie petrified on the floor for hours; he would disappear without warning, have the most daring ideas and could have an astonishing clear-sightedness. He would often read an interlocutor's thought with precision or humour. (Oh, how often he said to me: "You are depressed today," or "You've become so bourgeois," or "You need to get laid a bit more.") He gave out diagnoses to everyone and was oftentimes our therapist. He's the one who asked director

Christoph Schlingensief, who was looking for actors for his production of an *Opera Ghost Train* in São Paulo and wanted to meet our company to see whether we'd be a good fit, whether he had ever made love to a corpse. Schlingensief immediately hired us – this degree of unmediated presence is exactly what he needed for his piece.

Alexandre played several roles throughout the pieces we made. The first was Artaud's anarchist emperor, inspired by Elagabalus; the last was the role of Cesar, crushed by his mother. On stage, he led touching dialogues, gave enthusiastic monologues or bizarre exhortations ("What you need is sex," he threw in the faces of a perplexed Finnish audience). Occasionally, he would simply wander the stage in silence, with a lowered head and curved back that seemed to carry the weight of the world, and you'd know that in his head all the voices of the planet were confronting each other in an unforgiving battle. He repeatedly said that art didn't comfort him.

From the beginning of our trip to Amsterdam, he was very distressed, certain of an imminent catastrophe in his life. He kept repeating the word "passage." Was he referring to his father who was already old and whose death he expected? Or to himself? Or to our trip? We stayed very close to him during our time in the Netherlands but he already seemed to be exhausted beyond repair: he saw no way out. In the Van Gogh Museum, he let out a terrible scream that mobilized the entire security team of the museum from which he was immediately barred. Van Gogh would have handled the situation differently, had he been there. Alexandre refused the life of the museum, life in the museum, museumized life, artefacts made to suffocate life. His solitude was enormous, even though he was surrounded by a group of people that he kept mobilizing day and night, affectively, concretely.

During our performances, he was either strangely silent or he crossed the stage like an astronaut, stuffed into several jackets and a hood, as if he needed to protect himself from an unbearable cold which seemed however to chill him from inside.

Arriving back home in São Paulo where he no longer found a place for himself, Alexandre immediately went back to wander the streets. I was told that he went to a friend's bar where he got drunk on cachaça. The police found him unconscious in a street far from his neighbourhood and brought him to a public psychiatric service. There Alexandre stepped onto his *via crucis*: heavyweight nurses, agitation, screams, he is strapped to a bed as was customary centuries ago. Pedro França and Ana Goldstein from our company visit him and find him upright, his body still strapped to the bed, an untameable, howling King Kong. To the surprise of all the scared bystanders in the hospital, Alexandre calms down as soon as the two move closer to him. Subsequently, in our absence, he was medicated heavily and transferred to a general hospital "for clinical exams." God knows what they did to him in the intensive care unit during the first night, after a visit by Paula Francisquetti who found him pumped with tranquilizers, his hands and feet strapped to the bed, abandoned in the dark. I'm not sure whether he died during my visit the next day – looking asleep – or whether he had already been dead for hours without anybody at the hospital noticing. The important thing was that he didn't bother anyone any longer. Eduardo Lettière was right to say that Alexandre wouldn't have died if he had slept downtown that night, on Praça da Sé where he often went and where he had friends among the homeless and the prophets of the street who would have paid more attention to what he said than the nurses and doctors at the public hospital. In short, this was institutional, psychiatric, medical and perhaps even familial murder. People didn't want to bother with the level of suffering and anxiety that he carried in himself or the noise he made – it's so uncivilized to disturb a calm and orderly environment. Life has to continue without trouble in our cities and especially in hospitals, even though the latter are supposed to care for and attend to pain and not silence those who suffer. According to Erika Inforsato, Alexandre was a bomb of a man, but they managed to make him implode on time. Or according to Alejandra Riera, with whom we did a number of projects in which Alexandre had a strong presence: "He was a deserter, like many of us, but in his own way. He needed to make himself heard. Not to say something very articulate like a philosopher or to state something just

as politicians and militants claim to do. No, this kind of talk irritated him. He needed to make his entire body heard, his body which always thought so hard, to sound out a cry like “God is a machine” and slam his fist on the table to finally say what he thought of computers, of the 0s and the 1s. He needed things to resonate as they certainly resonated inside him.” Again Alexandra Riera: “In the end, Alexandre only spoke politically and poetically in the sense of escaping all established frameworks. He seemed very concerned by everything going on in the world and at the same time didn’t let anybody structure his thoughts or his speech, nothing. His character was destructive in a nonviolent way, for he was a destroyer of false illusions, false promises, false political speech, declarations of love or else. He was a very subtle, reserved person in the end.”

And Pedro França, who was assistant curator of the 2012 São Paulo Biennale but has since joined our company and became Alexandre’s best friend these last years, who invited Alexandre to be his “assistant” during his art history classes, wrote: “For him, theatre was a way of being in the world. Stealing from a McDonald’s for the thrill and glamour, robbing an Itaú bank, plundering the refrigerators of São Paulo’s rich neighbourhoods, maintaining silence for minutes while running in circles on stage, pass by the Praça da Sé, that’s being alive in the world. That is how there was life, effectively, where one can touch others and see the stamps, passports and tickets dissolve. Over at the hospital’s emergency service, where we first found him [upright strapped to the bed], my friend maintained a kind of stage awareness ... it was monumental ... in a way, there was no difference between Dockzaal [where we performed in Amsterdam] and the hospital, between the theatre, performance and the people there, between Herod and Herodias. [3] Ale is a guy who effectively, *effectively*, beyond any cliché, has revealed the line between art and life, has destroyed all documents, attestations and diplomas, has turned all forms inside out (forms of fashion, of rhetoric, theatre, gastronomy) and, I don’t know, for me he’s a kind of hero, in addition to being a great friend.”

After the funeral, we gathered at Praça da Sé on the steps of the Cathedral, where a homeless person read Alexandre’s texts as if he were his reincarnation,

identifying with those sentences full of irreverence, questions and poetry. Afterwards we went to a popular restaurant where Alexandre liked to eat feijoadas and we ate and drank in tribute to him.

In spite of all the joy he had and gave to us during the twenty years of our company, which he helped found and support, with his caustic humour, his comings and goings, we didn't know how or weren't able to prevent the worst. This was a suicide by society. We are devastated.

VII

Should one consider these lives as bare life? Without a doubt, from the point of view of power, here we find these lives susceptible of being killed without it constituting a crime, in a state of exception that is "scientifically legitimated." However, if we refuse starting from bare life in order to think biopower, and follow Muriel Combes suggestion in a Foucauldian and Simondonian line, it is rather about thinking these lives through the notion of "lives capable of conduct" (conduite)—from here a totally different horizon opens up. Even in the concentration camp but similarly in the most delicate contexts of our time, it's about our lunatics, Deligny's autists, the Bartlebys being a little bit everywhere, or even the anonymous of the protests in Brazil in 2013, it's always about the gestures, manners, modes, variations, resistances that are molecular and multitudinous.

We can dare a little supplementary leap. This living ensemble is being traversed by a double movement, asymmetrical and paradoxical, as much by desubjectivation as by subjectivation. Obviously, there are desubjectivations that kill, and other vital ones, the desirable subjectivations, but also other horrible ones.

Let's return to Alexandre's case. For a long while he had been submitted to a mortifying desubjectivation: he doesn't do anything, he doesn't serve anything, he's nobody. At the same time here is the subjected subjectivation that remains his

only option: he is the lunatic, the schizophrenic, the ill, in a minoritarian state and civil dependence, reterritorialized by the State, the family, psychiatry, social insurance. Desubjectified, subjectified, deterritorialized, reterritorialized. And yet, throughout the years together he could demonstrate an important inversion in two directions. On the one hand, his desubjectivation touched upon a nomadic drift (*dérive*), where erring became an exploitation of worlds, of affects, of uncoded connections. At the same time, a kind of heretic subjectivation took off: the anarchist emperor, the stubborn challenging of consensus, the different modes of performative desertion.

The question one can pose through the case of Alexandre is the following: how to repair or create these points, situations, contexts, dispositives through which the mortifying desubjectivation tips over into a nomadic desubjectivation, or, where the identitarian subjectivation shifts towards a creative process of subjectivation? This all concerns a micro- and a macropolitical challenge because it touches upon the mechanisms of disciplinary and biopolitical power. How to make a nomadic desubjectivation be accompanied by a creative subjectivation under the sign of affirmation, of a resistance, of a liveliness?

Maybe we have to consider exhaustion at the heart of this existential intersection, micro- and macropolitical, biopolitical. Does exhaustion signify the end of the world, or the end of a certain world we have to leave behind? Is exhaustion the sign of the end of the subject, or of a certain subjectivation? Of a desubjectivation, or a certain desubjectivation? Is it mortifying or vital? Black hole or opening? At the point where we are, it would be necessary to speak of Nietzsche's nihilism, with all its proper ambivalences: one doesn't have to defend oneself in regards to nihilism, but has to traverse it, take it to the end to open up a new horizon. As long as this shift is not reached (destruction/creation), the untying is uncertain. The same goes for exhaustion.

VIII

I allow myself to take up again a fragment on the notion of exhaustion, that I had been working on through some open paths left by Deleuze, in the light of these ambivalent perspectives.

Exhaustion is not mere tiredness, nor a renunciation of the body and mind but rather, more radically, it is the fruit of a disbelief, an operation of disconnection. It consists of unleashing the possibilities that are presented to us relative to the alternatives that surround us as well as the clichés that mediate and dampen our relation with the world in order to make it tolerable. While these clichés make the world tolerable, because they are unreal, they conversely end up making the world intolerable and unworthy of belief. Exhaustion undoes that which “binds” us to the world, that “imprisons” us in it and others, that “captures” us with its words and images, that “comforts” us with an allusion of entirety (of I, of We, of meaning, of freedom, of the future) in which we have long ceased to believe, even as we have remained attached to them. There is, no doubt, in this act of separation, a certain cruelty, which is in no way absent from the works of Beckett [who inspired Deleuze to think exhaustion], but this cruelty carries within itself a certain pity of another kind (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 351-423). Only through such a negation of adherence, such an unfastening, such an emptying, together with the impossibility that is established in this way, which Deleuze calls “rarefaction” (as much as he called for “vacuoles” of silence in order to be able, at least, to have something to say) does the necessity of something else arise, something which, with excessive pomp, we call “the creation of the possible.” We should not merely abandon this formula to the publicity experts, however; we should also avoid overloading it with an excessively imperative or capricious incumbency, replete with “will.” Perhaps we should preserve, as Beckett does, the trembling dimension which, amidst the most calculated precision, in his visual poetry, point to that “indefinite state” to which beings are elevated and whose correlative, even in the most concrete contexts, is the vagueness of becomings, at the point where they achieve their effect of deterritorialization. If Zourabichvili is correct in detecting “political chords” in *The Exhausted*, this is because Deleuze himself never ceased to extract such chords from the authors he analyzed, from Melville to Kafka,

from Lawrence to Ghérasim Luca. In the clinic, in art or in politics, there is a circuit that runs from the extenuation of the possible to the impossible, and from there to the creation of the possible, without linearity, circularity or determinism. It consists of a complex and reversible game between “nothing is possible” and “everything is possible.” (Pelbart 2015: 130-131)

It is the Catalanian psychoanalyst Tosquelles, master of a whole generation of French institutional psychiatry, in his book *Le vécu de la fin du monde dans la folie*, who evoked situations of collapse or illness felt as if nothing is possible, however, at the same time, everything is possible. Nothing is possible, everything is possible. Isn't it strange that we live in a similar way today, but in a somewhat twisted sense? When everything seems possible (Arab spring, June 2013 in Brazil) the truth emerges: nothing is possible anymore (military or juridical coup d'Etat, Donald Trump, Marine Le Pen). When the immoderation of power and the excessiveness of pain effectuate that the formula “everything is possible” thus becomes a horrible expression, since it means that it could always be worse, and, if “everything is possible” is equal to “nothing is possible,” we feel that the terms of this game deserve another configuration, or even another chessboard that we have to build day by day.

IX

Deborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, in the aforementioned book *The Ends of the World*, defend a political ecology of delay, hesitation, and attention. Against acceleration and the obsession with progress, “cosmopolitical delay,” a break, a suspension. In Lars von Trier's film *Melancholia*, the few who realize what is coming take refuge in a cabin made of twigs that won't protect them from the irreversible event: the collision with a star coming from space. By means of a ritual, the shock becomes a happening, in the strong sense of the word. Danowski and Viveiros de Castro write:

That little hut is the *only thing* in that moment that is capable of transforming the inescapable effect of the shock into an event, in the sense that Deleuze and Guattari give to that concept, when they say “the part that eludes its own actualization in everything that happens.” There, in that almost purely virtual hut ... what passes (the *pass*) ... is an operation of deceleration, of slowing down ...

And furthermore:

The autochthonous peoples of the American continent—the collectives of humans and non-humans whose history dates back to millennia before their collision with planet Commodity—are only a small part of contemporary Terran Resistance, this broad clandestine movement that has only begun to make itself visible in the planet occupied by the Moderns: in Africa, Australasia, Mongolia, in the backstreets and basement of Fortress Europe. They are not really in a position to lead any final combats or cosmopolitical Armageddons; it would be ridiculous to picture them as the seed of a new Majority. Above all, we should not expect that, if they could, they would run to the rescue of Humans, to redeem or justify those who have persecuted them implacably for five centuries ... one thing is for certain: Amerindian collectives, with their comparatively simple technologies that are nonetheless open to high-intensity syncretic assemblages, are a “figuration of the future” (Kroijer 2010), *not a remnant of the past*. Masters of the technoprimitivist bricolage and politico-metaphysical metamorphosis, they are one of the possible chances, in fact, of a *subsistence of the future*. To speak of the end of the world is to speak of the need to imagine, rather than a new world to replace our present one, a new people, *the people that are missing*. A people who believes in the world that it will have to create with whatever world we will have left them. (Danowski and Viveiros de Castro 2017: 120-123)

We can't avoid the echoes that impose themselves. We're not native tribes; there are few of us, and we too, before the nearing of the asteroid, or the many asteroids that have already collided with our existences – the Great Enclosure mentioned by Foucault, the Eurocentric, anthropocentric, rationalist, and scientist Humanism, of which a certain psychiatry inherited the most infamous aspects – build our fragile cabin made from twigs where we hold our small rituals. There we rescue a slowness. We reconnect with the voices of unreason, and from them we prospect

possible futures. We are not the “new people.” Yet, our delayed experimentation necessarily echoes many others from the homeless of our megalopolises to the yanomami spirit *xapiris*. Each on its own singular scale, however small, time, however derailed, and its happenings, however minuscule, compose a minor inhabitation. Nomadic and uncertain, as fragile in the face of the world’s economy and strong in sustaining that fragility, making a body out of each voice that affects it, with each gesture that reaches it, composing with each dissonance.

Notes

[1] Translated from Portuguese by Veronica Cordeiro. Additional passages in French have been translated by Christoph Brunner and Toni Pape. Translations of quotations have been provided by Filipe Ferreira and Steve Berg. A significant part of this text was originally written for the occasion of the visit and presentation of Ueinzz in Amsterdam as part of the *If I Can't Dance I Don't Want to be Part of your Revolution's* Performance in Residence program within Edition VI - Event and Duration (2015-2016). It was published in English under the title *Cosmopolitical Delay*, in December 2016. We would like to thank Frédérique Bergholtz and Susan Gibb for their generous authorization to use larger fragments, even though they are redesigned, completed and inflected for the present edition of *Inflexions*.

[2] Several of the extracts that follow were told to me by Paula Francisquetti and others, since during that period I had to miss many rehearsals.

[3] Herodidas here means the female version of Herod as it was also used in the theatre piece.

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