



# Political Uses of the Body; Philosophy, Aesthetics, Anthropology

Orgest Azizi

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**PËRDORIMET POLITIKE TË TRUPIT:  
FILOZOFI, ESTETIKË, ANTROPOLOGJI**



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# PËRDORIMET POLITIKE TË TRUPIT: FILOZOFI, ESTETIKË, ANTROPOLOGJI

*Aktet e universitetit veror ndërkombëtar*

Korçë 25-30 gusht 2014

Përgatiti për botim  
ORGEST AZIZI



Me mbështetjen e  
Ministrit të Kulturës



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## Hyrje

Universiteti veror ndërkombëtar me temë *Përdorime(t) politike të trupit – Filozofi, estetikë, antropologji (Usage(s) politiques du/des corps – Philosophie, esthétique, anthropologie / Political Uses of the Body/lies – Philosophy, Esthetics, Anthropology)* u zhvillua në Korçë në datat 25-30 gusht 2014, mu pranë njërës prej pikave më të « nxehta », në kufirin greko-maqedonas, të asaj që po niste të quhej ndërkohë « rruga e migrantëve » të ardhur nga Lindja e mesme drejt Europës që i refuzonte dhe rinxori kundrejt tyre arsenalin e vjetër kufitar të relave me gjemba. Ai u organizua me nismën e shoqatës filozofike franceze *Ici et Ailleurs. Association pour une philosophie nomade* ([www.ici-et-ailleurs.org/](http://www.ici-et-ailleurs.org/)), në bashkëpunim me Universitetin Paris 8 Vincennes Saint-Denis, National Chiao Tung University, Tajvan, Universitetin e Portos, Fakultetin e Shkencave Sociale të Universitetit të Tiranës dhe Institutin e Antropologjisë të Qendrës së Studimeve Albanologjike (QSA) në Tiranë, si dhe me ndihmën e Ministrisë së Kulturës.

Aktiviteti i Korçës zinte vend kësioj në një vazhdë veprimtarish të ngjashme të organizuara prej mëse dhjetë vitesh nga shoqata *Ici et Ailleurs*, në kuadrin e një rrjeti informal këmbimesh filozofiko-politike, i cili ka si partnerë kyç Universitetin Paris 8 në Francë, atë të Portos në Portugali, dhe atë Chiao Tung në Tajvan : të konsideruara si forma ndërhyrjesh në nyjen e një problematike gjeofilozofike dhe politike, ku zhvendosja e njerëzve dhe punimeve, përtej çdo turizmi akademik, nuk shkon pa zhvendosjen e koordinatave në të cilat artikulohej zakonisht problemet, rrjeti dhe shoqata në fjalë kanë organizuar takime filozofike rreth konceptit « *stasis*/luftë civile » në Tajvan (2004), konceptit të « kufijve » në Qipro (2005), « konfliktit



kulturor » (*Le différend culturel*, Francë 2007), *Biopolitikës dhe subjektivitetit* (Tajvan 2009), « popullit dhe populizmave » (Tiranë 2012), duke vijuar, pas Korçës, me një takim rreth temës *Kritikë dhe autonomi* në Universitetin e Gallatasarajit në Stamboll dhe me universitetin veror të rradhës në Trentels (Francë 2016) me temë *E pavetëdijshmja koloniale (L'inconscient colonial)*, ndërsa po përgatitet një i ri në 2018 në Turqi, rreth temës *Oriente/orientime : gjeofilozofi*.

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Argumenti shkencor i universitetit të Korçës, ku cekeshin disa nga pritshmëritë kryesore të aktivitetit dhe pistat që, për ne, aktualiteti na dukej se i bënte akute për mendimin që refuzon të rrijë i mbyllur në erudicion apo akademi, argument i cili u përdor po ashtu si prezantim për thirrjen publike të kontributeve, ishte si më poshtë :

« Problematika qëndrore e këtij universiteti veror është *trupi si objekt politik*. Përmes analizës së dispozitivave politikë të instrumentalizimit të trupave, ai synon ta vërë theksin te forca e tyre e qëndresës dhe format e ndryshme të përdorimit të tyre kundër-politik. Projekti pra, është më së shumti i përqendruar në anën aktive sesa atë reaktive, në horizontin projektiv më shumë se atë përshkruar, dhe kjo zhvendosje projektive do të duhej të ishte boshti kryesor rreth të cilit do të organizohen kontributet e pjesëmarrësve. Pyetja spinoziste mbi « kapacitetet e trupit » do të shpjerë kështu drejt një rinovimi të problematikave etike.

« Shqyrtimi i këtyre çështjeve nuk do të bëhet në kornizën e një horizonti të ngushtë kulturor, por do të jetë radikalisht shumëkultural, i hapur ndaj konceptesh të diferencuara të trupit dhe teknikave rreth tij, ndaj qasjesh të shumëllojshme, në pajtim me larminë e theksuar të prejardhjeve dhe mjedisëve kulturore, politike e konceptuale të pjesëmarrësve. Përmasa krahasimtare do të jetë pra themelore në këto punime.

« Çështja e mprehtë e politikave migratore do të jetë një objekt i përbashkët reflektimi, sikundër dhe proceset diskriminuese që ato bartin me vete : një vend të veçantë duhet të zënë implikimet bashkëkohore të shenjimit të trupave, para së gjithash ato biometrike, në përmasat e tyre sa juridike dhe ndëshkimore. Shkëmbimet e informacionit dhe të dhënave biometrike mes kompanive private dhe qeverive, apo ideja e një karte biometrike individuale

për përfitimin e shërbimeve shoqërore do të jenë objekt i analizës, qoftë si teknika pushteti, qoftë si terren për ndërhyrje dhe mendim kritik. Trupi është jo vetëm objekt i abuzimeve politike masive, siç është universaliteti i torturës, por edhe shënjestër e të ashtuquajturit « menaxhim i burimeve njerëzore », që ndërhyjnë deri në shtresat më të fshehta : që nga projektet e « evaluimit » dhe « ndjekjes » së fëmijëve në moshë të ulët, ato të detektimit të riskut dhe delinkuencës së hershme, deri te dykuptimësia e « vetvrasjes në vendin e punës » si përdorim politik i shkallës së fundit. Edhe pse Michel Foucault mbetet një nga frymëzimet kryesore të këtyre analizave, ato do të jenë të hapura ndaj qasjesh mjekësore, politike, filozofike e kontinentale heterogjene, deri dhe të kundërta.

« Më në përgjithësi, universiteti do synojë të përshkojë mësymjen e madhe tekno-politike të trupave (nga dietetika dhe mjekësia « përmirësuese » deri te miksohet me elektronikën dhe neuronikën), që vë në pikëpyetje tërë konceptimet tradicionale të « trupit » (si trup i gjallë, njerëzor, etj.), si dhe *format e reja të normativitetit që imponohen aty*. Në këtë konfigurim hyn trajtimi i çështjes gjinore, bashkë me proceset e diferencimit dhe dominimit dhe biologjizimit që veprojnë në të. Por po ashtu raportet subjektive me normat dhe regjimet e ndryshme pushtetore që përcjellin ato : si në rastet e racalizimit të trupave, për shembull, nga njëra anë, dhe modalitetet e politike të refuzimit të tij (si lëvizja *Black Lives Matter*), nga ana tjetër. Në këtë perspektivë, përdorimet estetike të trupit do të mund të lidhen me përdorimet politike të artit, ku do të shyrtohen fuqitë e trupave si forca qëndrore dhe pushteti mbi trupin si instrument manipulimi. Në këtë pikë ku statusi biologjik lidhet me procese gjuhësore subjektive dhe akulturimi, ka vend si për legjitimimin e formave të ndryshme të pushtetit, ashtu dhe për denoncimin e abuzimeve të tyre.

« Disa nga këto forma janë rivendikimet lidhur me kënaqësitë dhe përdorimin e tyre, siç emblematizohen në veçanti nga politikat homoseksuale, apo, në të kundërt, kur ato bëhen instrumente normative dhe manipulimi ekonomik, si në rastin e hiper-mediatizimit të sportit apo në rrjetet e prostitucionit. Së fundi, një vend i mjaftueshëm duhet t'i lihet trajtimit të trupit në raport me mejdisin, me pushtetet ekonomike që ushtrohen aty si dhe rivendikimeve politike që lindin rreth tij. »

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Tekstet e përzgjedhura për botimin e këtushëm janë natyrisht vetëm një pjesë e konferencave të mbajtura gjatë universitetit dhe, më tej akoma, japin një ide të pjesëshme të veprimtarive të ndryshme dhe formave të larmishme të ndërhyrjeve, të shtrira në gjashtë ditët e punimeve : konferenca, individuale ose në grup, atelje, performanca, seanca debati përfshinë rreth 60 pjesëmarrës, të ardhur nga mëse dhjetë vende të ndryshme (që nga Tajvani, Koreja e Jugut, Kina, deri te Franca, Turqia, Portugalia e Brazili). Një rëndësi të veçantë për mbarëvajtjen e universitetit veror kishte edhe rrënjësia e tij në vendin e punimeve dhe shtrirja e aktiviteteve jashtë formës së konferencës në vende të ndryshme të qytetit dhe të hapura për publikun. Kështu, psikanalisti dhe fotografi francez Jacques Gayard, i cili kishte vizituar Shqipërinë në kuadrin e vizitave të grupeve majtiste/maoiste në vitin 1974, solli për herë të parë pas 40-vjetësh një cikël fotografish të bëra – pjesërisht fshehurazi dhe disa prej të cilave edhe në Korçë – gjatë vizitës së tij të parë, të cilat u ekspozuan falas për publikun gjatë gjithë javës së punimeve në mjediset e muzeut Mësonjtorja e Parë në qendër të qytetit. Po ashtu, në « seancat e mbrëmjes », pjesëmarrësit shumëkombësh të universitetit, secili me horizontet e tyre kulturore e politike, u ballafaquan me një sërë rimarrjesh të problematikave historike e politike vendore në lidhje me temën : një projektim i filmit dokumentar *Ekuinoks*, pasuar nga një takim e debat i gjatë me regjisorin Kujtim Çashku në sallën e Teatrit të qytetit ; një konferencë debat më publicistin Fatos Lubonja, rreth temës së anagazhimit politik sot, dhe një debat me regjisorët Erjona Çami dhe Elton Baxhaku pas projektimit të filmit të tyre dokumentar *SkaNdal*, rreth historikut të lëvizjes LGBT në Shqipëri. *Last, but not least*, përditshmëria në rrugët dhe mjediset e qytetit, vizitat në zonën industriale gjysma të braktisur të kohës së socializmit, deri dhe eksplorimi i kuzhinës lokale me ekuilibrin e vështirë që duhej gjendur mes mishngrënësve entuziastë të kërnackave tradicionale dhe vegjetarianëve minoritarë, ishin pjesë e çimentimit të asaj që me fjalët e filozofit francez Jacques Rancière do ta quanim *partage du sensible* : prodhimi i një ndjesoreje të përbashkët mes heterogjenësh, ku luhet çdo herë basti i ngjizjes së një komuniteti mes trupash të mendimit, të cilët mendimësinë e tyre e sendërtojnë radikalisht në botë, me sytë e ngulur, bashkarisht, në problemet e saj.

PËRDORIMET POLITIKE TË TRUPIT:  
filozofi, estetikë, antropologji

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USAGE(S) POLITIQUES DU/DES CORPS:  
philosophie, esthétique, anthropologie

~

POLITICAL USES OF THE BODY/IES:  
Philosophy, Esthetics, Anthropology



## Le philosophe renversé

ALAIN BROSSAT

Je voudrais parler d'un geste qui se reproduit tout au long du parcours de la philosophie occidentale ou plutôt qui en affecte le corps sur un mode qui n'est pas celui de la répétition mécanique, mais de ce que Kierkegaard appelle *la reprise*. Ce geste, c'est celui du philosophe qui tombe. Hans Blumenberg, dans son essai *Le rire de la servante de Thrace* fait le choix de travailler sur cette reprise en suivant le fil de la réinvention perpétuelle de « l'anecdote » de la chute de Thalès dans le puits, alors qu'il marche la tête en l'air le regard rivé sur la voûte stellaire, il suit les parcours de cette anecdote dans toutes ses variantes et « lectures » divergentes, de Platon à Heidegger, donc.

Je procéderai différemment, tout en partant moi aussi du faux-pas de Thalès, mais en enchaînant sur d'autres chutes philosophiques notoires, qui nous conduiront, pour le coup, non pas de Thalès à Heidegger, mais de Thalès à Barthes et Foucault, en passant par Montaigne et Rousseau. Le philosophe, donc, tombe, avec une insistance telle que l'on en viendrait à soupçonner que c'est sa condition même qui le destine à la chute. Mais chacune de ces *tombées* philosophiques est, dans l'élément même de la répétition, spécifique. Elle se produit en situation. Dans le cas de Thalès, elle s'associe à l'eau, dans ceux de Montaigne et Rousseau à l'animal qui jette le philosophe à terre, et avec Foucault et Barthes, elle a pour cadre la civilisation automobile qui est aussi celle de l'asphalte et de sa dureté de pierre.

J'ai parlé au début d'un geste – tomber comme un geste. Mais est-ce si sûr ? Il ne s'agit pas, assurément, d'un mouvement volontaire, tout au contraire, mais n'oublions pas pour autant que tout geste, loin de là, ne résulte pas de l'action consciente et volontaire d'un sujet le mettant en œuvre en vue d'une fin – il existe toutes sortes de gestes automatiques, d'habitude, qui investissent un corps et le mettent en mouvement sans relever le moins du monde d'une décision.

Cependant, ce qui caractérise le geste, c'est qu'il est du côté de l'actif, qu'il déploie une puissance, de quelque espèce ou valeur que soit celle-ci. Or, la *tombée* du philosophe, au sens où la nuit tombe, comme quelque chose qui, purement et simplement, advient, que ce soit par la nature des choses ou par accident, se produit en dehors de tout champ d'intentionnalité, c'est-à-dire de déploiement ou de projection d'une subjectivité et d'un corps dans un espace donné. Elle est le temps d'arrêt pur, la stase ou la coupure qui met à mal et la continuité de l'existence et l'intégrité du corps du philosophe. Il y avait un bonhomme qui se déplaçait (ce sont malheureusement, dans les cas que relève la tradition philosophique, tous les hommes), à pied, à cheval, en voiture, et voici que ce mouvement vers l'avant est brutalement interrompu. Tomber, choir, être renversé (etc.), cela suppose bien toutes sortes de mouvements, que vont reconstituer nos philosophes accidentés après-coup, mais ces mouvements (désordonnés, involontaires) ne sont pas à proprement parler des gestes – plutôt l'inverse.

Le geste, c'est précisément dans la reprise que le philosophe va faire de sa propre chute (ou de celle d'un autre philosophe, mort en général), dans le retour sur l'accident qu'il va prendre forme. Le propre d'un geste, qu'il soit volontaire ou non, c'est de déployer du sens, de peupler le monde de tout un ensemble de signes et de valeurs. Ce n'est évidemment pas dans l'instant-brèche de sa tombée que le philosophe entre dans ce geste, c'est-à-dire l'accomplit ou est traversé par lui. C'est dans l'après-coup où il revient sur l'interruption que constitue la tombée pour faire de ce suspens (et de ce qui s'y associe, on va le voir : état-limite, excentration, descellement, dédoublement, désobjectivation...) que prend corps le geste consistant non pas tant à faire de la chute l'objet d'une méditation philosophique, mais plutôt de placer la condition de l'humain et celle du philosophe sous le signe de la chute – tout autre chose, ici, nous le verrons, que le péché originel.

Soit Thalès de Milet, donc, que Blumenberg désigne comme le « protophilosophe » et qui, six siècles avant Jésus-Christ, inaugure la lignée des philosophes « tombeurs ». Il existe, dans l'Antiquité même, de nombreuses versions de sa chute, celle du fabuliste Esope, celle de Platon dans le *Théétète*, et, plus tard, celle de Diogène Laërce, notamment, dans sa célèbre *Vie, sentence et doctrines des philosophes illustres*. Je m'en tiens ici à celle de Platon : « Thalès étant tombé dans un puits, tandis que, occupé d'astronomie, il regardait en l'air, une petite servante de Thrace, toute mignonne et pleine de bonne humeur, se mit, dit-on, à le railler de mettre tant d'ardeur à savoir ce qui est au ciel, alors qu'il ne s'apercevait pas de ce qu'il avait devant lui et à ses pieds ! »

Le livre de Blumenberg va consister à montrer que l'endurance de cette anecdote dans la tradition occidentale, au point qu'on ne prend pas grand risque à la qualifier rétrospectivement de fondatrice, tient à sa parfaite ambivalence. La tradition, pour dire les choses de façon volontairement simplificatrice, ne va cesser de se diviser, de Platon à nos jours, en partisans du savant astronome (le premier qui sut prédire une éclipse de soleil) et supporters de la petite servante. Pour Platon, rappelle Blumenberg, Thalès n'est jamais qu'un *alias* de Socrate : derrière le rire de la petite servante se fait entendre le grondement de la foule vitupérant le philosophe qui déprave la jeunesse ; la « comédie qui se joue au bord du puits », dit Blumenberg, a pour équivalent « la tragédie qui se déroule devant le tribunal populaire ». Thalès-Socrate, ce n'est pas tant pour Platon le philosophe qui s'efforce de percer les secrets de la nature, mais le champion du concept, et c'est dans la mesure où il se détourne de la *polis* pour se tourner vers les idées et tente de convaincre ses auditeurs de le suivre sur cette voie qu'il suscite la haine des citoyens. Il se rend coupable de détourner les citoyens du proche, du sensible, au profit d'un lointain nébuleux et c'est ainsi qu'il deviendra le martyr de la « pure idéalité ». Il est intéressant que ce soit ici un personnage féminin qui, dans le récit platonicien, incarne la *vox populi*, ce bon sens populaire qui s'amuse du *tournant* dont Socrate se fait l'avocat et qui le conduit à sa chute. Toute mignonne et pétulante qu'elle est, dans la version platonicienne, ce qu'annonce son éclat de rire n'a rien de bien joyeux : l'enchaînement d'une persécution sur un faux-pas.

Chez Esope, fabuliste à demi-légendaire, l'anecdote semble prendre une toute autre tournure : pas de noms propres, dans sa version, juste « un astronome » qui, plongé dans la contemplation du ciel, tombe dans un puits,



et « un passant » qui, entendant ses « cris lamentables » et ses « gémissements », lui fait la leçon : « Eh bien, toi ! Dit-il à l'astronome, « tu cherches à saisir les phénomènes célestes, et ce qu'il y a sur terre, tu ne le vois pas ». Esope ébauche ici un sillon qui deviendra profond, puisque cette version de l'observateur des étoiles se *ridiculisant* en « trébuchant sur les plus basses réalités qui se trouvent devant ses pieds », on va en identifier toutes sortes de reprises, de Montaigne à Feuerbach, en passant par Samuel Richardson et Pierre Bayle...

La version de Montaigne mérite d'être citée, à cause de son tranchant : « Je sais bon gré à la garce milésienne qui voyant le philosophe Thalès s'amuser continuellement à la contemplation de la voûte céleste, et tenir toujours les yeux contremont, lui mit en son passage quelque chose à le faire broncher, pour l'avertir qu'il serait temps d'amuser son pensement aux choses qui étaient dans les nues quand il aurait pourvu à celles qui étaient à ses pieds ; elle lui conseillait certes bien de regarder vers soi qu'au ciel... » (*Essais*, II, XXII).

On voit bien ici ce qui est en jeu dans la reprise de l'anecdote où il est question du philosophe qui tombe : tout en confiant à la servante le soin d'administrer la philosophie de la « fable », au prix d'une inversion brutale des positions, Montaigne produit un déplacement de sens décisif : il fait de la servante l'avocate non plus de la prise en compte des réalités immédiates, mais de la connaissance et du souci de soi – quand bien même ceux-ci, pour la position sceptique qu'il incarne ici, s'avéreraient en fin de compte tout aussi difficiles à atteindre que la connaissance des astres...

Pour le reste, on mentionnera au passage que la sagesse change ici également de camp à l'occasion de ce plongeon mémorable, en termes de « catégories sociales et de genre : elle passe de celui du savant, un citoyen distingué, on peut le supposer, à celui du plus infime – l'esclave, elle passe d'un vieil homme à une jeune femme.

Nietzsche, lui, voit les choses tout différemment. Pour lui, c'est Thalès le réaliste, pas la servante de Thrace : c'est que, voyant dans l'eau l'origine de toute chose – ici s'éclaire sous un tout autre jour, donc, la chute dans le puits - , il rompt avec les approches mythiques ou allégoriques de la *physis* en concevant pour la première fois l'univers entier, si hétéroclite soit-il, comme résultant de l'évolution d'une matière unique. Pour Nietzsche, c'est ce sens de l'abstraction, son indifférence aux dieux des Grecs, sous l'influence, peut-être, des Egyptiens, qui va faire de lui un « homme d'Etat », un homme politique d'influence qui perçoit la menace perse pesant sur les villes

ioniennes et leur conseille de s'unir en un Etat fédéral, plutôt que de cultiver leurs particularismes et le folklore mythologique qui l'accompagne. Contre le rire superficiel de la servante de Thrace qui condense tous les préjugés anthropocentriques de Grecs, Thalès est pour Nietzsche le réaliste « parce qu'il a commencé sans fables fantastiques à regarder les profondeurs de la nature, en y voyant une exigence pour la survie de la *polis* ». Thalès est, pour Nietzsche, le philosophe des commencements par excellence en ce sens que, sans craindre de s'opposer à la tradition grecque de son temps, il finit par répondre au roi Crésus qui lui demande ce qu'il pense des dieux, après avoir demandé plusieurs fois un temps de réflexion, laconiquement – *Rien*. En ce sens aussi, qu'avec ce « rien », lorsqu'il est question de répondre à la question « d'où vient le monde ? », il dit : *de l'eau*.

Je n'ai pas le temps de m'étendre plus longtemps sur cette étoile filante qu'est, dans le ciel de la philosophie occidentale, l'anecdote relative à la chute de Thalès ; mais j'espère avoir fait ressortir avec celle-ci la façon dont prend corps le geste ou la suite gestuelle de la philosophie en relation avec cet effondrement : c'est tout un champ de pensée qui se constitue autour de cette image et de ses innombrables anamorphoses. Un champ de pensée traversé par toutes sortes de discontinuités et de tensions. L'image est ici tout sauf une reproduction ou une surface de réfraction, elle est une force motrice, un élément dynamique qui soutient la philosophie et au-delà la pensée dans leur effort pour se redonner prise sur elles-mêmes là où un accident est venu interrompre le cours de leur progression. Ce n'est pas pour rien que c'est ici Montaigne dont nous avons vu le parti qu'il tire de la mésaventure de Thalès qui se présente comme notre prochain « tombeur »...

Au chapitre VI du second livre des *Essais*, « De l'exercitation », Montaigne fait entrer le récit de la chute dans le champ de l'expérience propre du philosophe. Avec le plongeon de Thalès dans le puits, on demeurerait dans celui, incertain, de la fable circulant de bouche en bouche (Benjamin) et, pour cette raison même, sujette à toutes les variations. Montaigne relate une chute de cheval intervenue sur ses terres, en Dordogne, au temps troublé des guerres civiles en France (les guerres de religion), et consignée comme telle, avec grande précision. Un jour qu'il prenait de l'exercice à une lieue de sa gentilhommière, sur le dos d'un petit cheval docile, il est jeté cul par-dessus tête par une puissante monture, lancée imprudemment au galop par l'un

de ses serviteurs. Le récit imagé qu'il fait de cette collision est entré dans les annales : « Un de mes gens, grand et fort, monté sur un puissant roussin, qui avait la bouche désespérée, frais au demeurant et vigoureux, pour faire le hardi et devancer ses compagnons vint à le pousser à toute bride droit dans ma route et fondre comme un colosse sur le petit homme et petit cheval, et le foudroyer de sa roideur et de sa pesanteur, nous envoyant l'un et l'autre les pieds contre mont : et si que voilà le cheval abattu et couché tout étourdi, moi dix ou douze pas au-delà, mort, écorché, mon épée que j'avais à la main, à plus de dix pas au-delà, ma ceinture en pièces, n'ayant ni mouvement ni sentiment, non plus qu'une souche ».

Dans son récit de l'accident et de ses suites, Montaigne entend témoigner de l'expérience qu'il a faite d'un état limite, intermédiaire entre la vie et la mort, il s'agit d'une véritable « mise en philosophie » de cette brutale interruption de sa promenade tranquille. Tout, dans cette expérience, se présente au rebours du témoignage attendu : alors même qu'il lui apparaît, dans l'état qui suit immédiatement la chute et le choc, que [s]a vie ne tient plus qu'au bout des lèvres », dans cet état intermédiaire entre conscience et inconscience, sa sensation dominante est « non seulement exempte de déplaisir, ains [mais] mêlée à cette douceur que sentent ceux qui se laissent glisser au sommeil ». L'état limite qu'il va ensuite analyser est celui d'un vif mouvement de désubjection, de perte de l'empire du sujet sur lui-même : ce sont des sensations qui le traversent, des « imaginations » de toutes sortes, plutôt que des pensées. C'est la vie qui, dans cet état nébuleux, se poursuit en lui, sans que la conscience l'accompagne. Il va donc découvrir, en revenant après-coup sur ce qu'il a alors éprouvé, que le champ de la subjectivité est autrement plus vaste que celui de la réflexivité ou de l'exercice de l'empire d'un sujet souverain : « Etant tout évanoui, je me travaillais d'entrouvrir mon pourpoint à belles ongles (car j'étais désarmé), et si sais je ne me sentais en l'imagination rien qui me blessât : car il y a plusieurs mouvements en nous qui ne partent pas de notre ordonnance ».

Montaigne va comparer ces mouvements involontaires et les sensations qui les accompagnent dans cet état comateux à ces « douleurs que le pied ou la main sentent pendant que nous dormons [et qui] *ne sont pas à nous* [je souligne, A.B.]. Il consigne dans son récit un certain nombre de faits et gestes dont il n'a gardé *aucune mémoire*, mais qui lui ont été rapportés plus tard par son entourage : « Ils disent que je m'avisai de commander qu'on donnât un cheval à ma femme, que je voyais s'empêtrer et se tracasser dans

le chemin qui est montueux et malaisé ». Il se voit donc rétrospectivement dans les dispositions qui sont alors les siennes, mais comme dédoublé, ce moi qui « commande » alors est à plus d'un titre un autre. Un moi-autre dont les sentiments et les pensées ont pris un tour vraiment insolite – prêt, notamment, à accueillir la mort comme une issue heureuse à sa présente situation : « On me présenta force remèdes, de quoi je n'en reçus aucun, tenant pour certain que j'étais blessé à mort par la tête. C'eût été sans mentir une mort bien heureuse ; car la faiblesse de mon discours me gardait d'en rien juger, et celle du corps d'en rien sentir ». Ce n'est que le lendemain que lui revient la mémoire de l'accident et de l'enchaînement des circonstances qui l'ont conduit au piteux état dans lequel il se trouve.

La principale conclusion qu'il tire de cet « événement assez léger » est la suivante : il est bon que le philosophe, le sage « s'épie de près », qu'il consigne et communique le récit de ce studieux examen de soi. De cet examen, il attend une connaissance de ses propres « profondeurs opaques et replis internes ». Il va en faire, en fin de compte, le but de son existence, indissociable, bien sûr, de sa condition de maître, et de l'*otium* qui en constitue d'une des principales attributions : « Il y a plusieurs années que je n'ai que moi pour visée à mes pensées, que je ne contrôle et étudie que moi ; et si j'étudie autre chose, c'est pour *le coucher sur moi* [je souligne, A. B.], ou en moi, pour mieux dire ».

Montaigne ne craint pas ici de se déclarer en conflit ouvert avec la maxime chrétienne qui répute le parler de soi comme haïssable, l'associant à l'orgueil, et qui, pour cette raison, le prohibe. Se réclamant de Socrate, il voit ce récit de soi non pas comme inspiré par la vanité, comme un exercice narcissique, mais bien comme une tentative d'approcher, à travers une singularité, la condition humaine elle-même ; il s'agit donc pour lui d'un exercice de paradoxale humilité, puisque ce sera d'abord dans toutes ses défaillances et faiblesses (faisant bonne place à la mémorable *chute* qui est ici en question) que s'observe, se médite et se relate ce singulier ; ce dont il s'agit en effet de témoigner en fin de compte, c'est de la « nihilité » de l'humaine condition ».

« Ce sont mes gestes que j'écris, c'est moi, c'est mon essence », dit Montaigne. En tramant un récit de soi qui tente de se tenir au plus près de ses gestes et de ses défaillances, il prolonge, pour les autres, ce qu'il appelle « son métier » - vivre. Son métier et son « art » (l'écriture), dit-il, c'est « vivre ».

Ce qui se présente à nous ici peut être décrit comme une figure dialectique exemplaire : Montaigne relève, surmonte, transforme (*hebt auf...*) l'épreuve de l'accident qui, dans le temps de son effectuation se présente comme pure

interruption, en *expérience malgré tout* : le sujet jeté bas, destitué, coupé de ses bases conscientes se reprend et se retrouve dans la méditation après-coup non seulement sur la fragilité de la condition humaine, mais aussi sur les faiblesses de l'imagination et les craintes imaginaires – celle de la mort au premier lieu. Il ne se contente pas d'inventer une forme du récit autobiographique dans lequel sont en tension sagesse antique (les influences stoïciennes notamment) et culture chrétienne de l'aveu ; il dessine une configuration dans laquelle « l'extrême » (ici, la chute comme expérience limite), tend à devenir cet espace indistinct dans lequel un sujet humain explore les sous-sols de sa condition propre. L'expérience paradoxale que décrit ici Montaigne trouve son écho immédiat pour nous non seulement dans l'invention, au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle du domaine de l'*existentiel*, mais aussi dans la relation que nous établissons tout naturellement, après les cataclysmes de ce siècle d'épouvante, entre l'épreuve du désastre et la découverte de vérités « cachées » sur notre propre condition (la guerre totale, les camps, le génocide, la maladie et la vieillesse comme champ infiniment renouvelé des « expériences extrêmes »). C'est en ce sens que, plus de quatre siècles après sa mort, Montaigne persiste à être notre parfait contemporain.

On pourrait aussi, pour s'amuser un peu, dessiner une allégorie politique à propos de la chute de Montaigne : en ces temps troublés où tout, dans le royaume de France, est *out of joint*, c'est un serviteur imprudent et incapable, littéralement, de rester à sa place, qui désarçonne le maître et le jette à terre, le privant de cette posture verticale dans laquelle il domine le monde. On ne manquera pas de voir dans cette conduite maladroite du « puissant roussin » par le serviteur un acte manqué tendant à la destitution du maître : c'est bien miracle si celui-ci n'en meurt pas et c'est bien comme en un cortège funéraire que ses gens reconduisent chez lui son corps inanimé...

Le maître, ici, fait corps avec son cheval, constitue avec celui-ci un agencement de maîtrise, pour le meilleur et pour le pire : la scène que rapporte Montaigne trouve sa place dans une inépuisable série dans laquelle s'identifieraient d'autres cavaliers fragiles et voués à la destitution – Don Quichotte, le maître de Jacques dans le roman de Diderot, etc.

En 1774, Rousseau s'est, depuis plusieurs années déjà, détaché du monde. Il a rompu avec ses anciens amis les philosophes, a pris ses distances avec ses puissants admirateurs et protecteurs, il a voyagé et s'est enfermé dans une croissante solitude, poursuivi par des « ennemis », entouré de « complots » -

réels ou imaginaires. Il continue d'écrire, mais pour soi seulement, en quête de « tranquillité ». Dans cet état, il est, dit-il, « cent fois plus heureux » qu'il ne l'était lorsqu'il vivait parmi les hommes. C'est que ceux-ci ont « arraché à [s]on cœur toutes les douceurs de la société ». Leur jugement lui est désormais indifférent, au point qu'il se sent « sur terre comme dans une planète où [il] serait tombé de celle qu'[il] habitait ».

Le voici donc qui, tout entier revenu à soi, se promène, contemple, médite et consigne pour lui seul (dit-il dans *Les Rêveries*) les résultats de ses réflexions. De la même façon, note-t-il, qu'il se sent « nul désormais parmi les hommes », il tend, dit-il, vers le « désœuvrement de [s]on corps », au fur et à mesure qu'il s'éloigne des soucis terrestres : « Mon corps n'est plus pour moi qu'un embarras, qu'un obstacle, et je m'en dégage d'avance autant que je puis ». Montaigne, dans *Les Essais*, se prend pour objet d'étude afin de rejoindre par ce biais, l'humaine condition. Dans *Les Rêveries*, appendice aux *Confessions* en forme d'« informe journal », Rousseau se dissocie explicitement du premier : il écrit, dit-il, « avec un but contraire au sien » : C'est que Montaigne, « n'écrivit ses *Essais* que pour les autres, et je n'écris mes rêveries que pour moi ».

Tel est donc le contexte moral dans lequel a lieu, le jeudi 24 octobre 1776, cet « accident imprévu [qui] vient rompre le fil de mes idées et leur donner pour quelque temps un autre cours ». Un accident en forme de bifurcation, donc, encore une fois. Ce jour-là, raconte Rousseau, il remonte après dîner la rue du Chemin-Vert en direction de Ménilmontant et de là, « prenant les sentiers à travers les vignes et les prairies », il traverse « jusqu'à Charonne le riant paysage qui sépare ces deux villages ». Il chemine joyeusement, herborise comme à son habitude, médite sur le cours des saisons en cette belle journée d'automne. De sombres pensées l'assaillent tout à coup - « Qu'ai-je fait ici-bas ? J'étais fait pour vivre, et je meurs sans avoir vécu... », puis il redescend « sur les six heures » la colline de Ménilmontant. C'est alors qu'un « gros chien danois » lancé à toute vitesse devant une voiture vient le heurter en pleine course et le projette en l'air. « Je ne sentis, consigne Rousseau, ni le coup ni la chute, ni rien de ce qui s'ensuivit jusqu'au moment où je revins à moi ». Non pas « désœuvrement » du corps, donc, mais, carrément, *absentement*...

Lorsqu'il reprend connaissance, il se trouve « entre les bras de trois ou quatre jeunes gens » qui lui racontent ce qui s'est passé : tombé la tête la première sur un pavé « très raboteux », dans le sens de la descente, il a manqué se faire écraser par la voiture que précédait le chien – le cocher étant parvenu *in extremis* à retenir ses chevaux.

Une chute dont les circonstances présentent de frappantes parentés avec celle de Montaigne. Mais le caractère de « reprise » de l'accident dont est victime Rousseau saute davantage encore aux yeux dès lors que l'on examine la façon dont le narrateur va l'élaborer : « La nuit s'avavançait. J'aperçus le ciel, quelques étoiles, et un peu de verdure. Cette première sensation fut un moment délicieux. Je ne me sentais encore que par là. Je naissais dans cet instant à la vie, et il me semblait que je remplissais de ma légère existence tous les objets que j'apercevais. Tout entier au moment présent, je ne me souvenais de rien ; je n'avais nulle notion distincte de mon individu, pas la moindre idée de ce qui venait de m'arriver. Je voyais couler mon sang comme j'aurais vu couler un ruisseau, sans songer seulement que ce sang m'appartînt en aucune sorte. Je sentais dans toute mon âme un calme ravissant auquel chaque fois que je me le rappelle, je ne trouve rien de comparable dans toute l'activité des plaisirs connus ».

Dans ce passage célèbre, à l'instar de celui où Montaigne relate sa chute de cheval, Rousseau, pourrait-on dire, renchérit sur les principaux motifs de celle-ci : perte de toute sensation de la durée, dissociation du sujet d'avec son corps, dispersion – le tout sur fond de tranquillité d'âme supérieure et d'une forme de jouissance confinant à l'extase. Dans ce présent éternisé de la sensation pure, indissociable de la désindividuation du sujet, c'est une renaissance, un recommencement absolu qui se dessinent, un retour aux sources de la vie. Sur ce point aussi, Rousseau va « plus loin » que Montaigne sur la voie de la transfiguration de la chute accidentelle en révélation, événement fondateur ou refondateur.

Car ce n'est pas seulement, dans l'instant suspendu de la « première sensation » la crainte (imaginaire) de la mort qui s'évanouit. Ce n'est pas seulement que le sujet semble y parachever, n'éprouvant aucune douleur et voyant son propre sang s'écouler comme celui d'un autre, le processus de mise à distance de son propre corps dans lequel il s'est, on l'a vu, engagé. Ce n'est pas seulement qu'une paradoxale sensation de souveraineté et de légèreté vient alors repousser la sensibilité ordinaire de l'individu à sa vulnérabilité – celle de son enveloppe corporelle, celle de son existence même. Non, c'est surtout, et c'est ici que la « reprise » rousseauiste va distinctement se décaler de l'accident relaté par Montaigne, le narrateur des *Rêveries* voit se découvrir sous ses yeux tout un panorama ; il va apprendre à s'y voir, par les yeux des autres, *comme s'il était déjà mort*.

Sous l'instant extatique inscrit dans le creux de la chute-interruption, se dessine alors la reprise du fil de l'idée fixe de Rousseau – le désir de sa mort qui anime les conspirateurs qui l'entourent.

En effet, alors même que l'accident le laisse certes tout contusionné mais, comme par miracle, sans « rien de brisé, pas même une dent », Rousseau voit avec horreur se reformer dans les heures qui suivent les « ténèbres » qui, depuis si longtemps, entourent son existence, du fait de l'inlassable activisme de ses ennemis : la rumeur de sa mort se met à circuler dès les lendemains de l'accident, accompagné de toutes sortes de manœuvres visant à lui attribuer un recueil d'écrits « fabriqués tout exprès » et destinés, bien sûr, à salir son nom. Il est alors frappé par le vif désir de le voir disparaître qu'inspirent à ses contemporains sa « droiture », sa « franchise », il comprend alors que sa mort elle-même ne mettra pas un terme à l'acharnement de ses ennemis à le diffamer et à nuire à sa mémoire. Il entre alors dans ces dispositions énoncées comme définitives dans lesquelles il s'en remet à la seule mansuétude divine, convaincu que « tôt ou tard », justice lui sera rendue. Tel serait donc le paradoxe de la syncope consécutive à la chute : bien loin qu'elle soit un moment d'obscurcissement, de perte, elle est le creuset d'une révélation qui va permettre au sujet de s'établir dans cette position où il se voit hors d'atteinte, à tout jamais, des épreuves que lui imposent ses contemporains, où il devient indifférent à leur jugement.

Ayant fait un tour complet sur lui-même suivi d'une petite mort, il revient de cette épreuve comme un ressuscité, lucide, fortifié, prêt une fois pour toutes à faire face au « mensonge du monde » (Jean Starobinski) et à affronter le tribunal de la postérité.

On tourne le dos ici distinctement à cette sorte de retour de sagesse antique que mettait en scène Montaigne en méditant sur sa chute de cheval, pour aller vers un motif infiniment plus moderne – celui du mensonge social, du mensonge inhérent à la constitution sociale de nos sociétés. Le Socrate moderne qui vit dans la vérité et la proclame est condamné à se heurter à cette règle du jeu inavouable qui voue les individus à l'hypocrisie, à la médisance, à la méchanceté.

Juillet 1978. La civilisation mécanique de la voiture automobile s'est, depuis longtemps, imposée sur celle du cheval et autres animaux utiles. Foucault, sortant de chez lui, se fait renverser par un taxi en traversant la rue de Vaugirard. Il avait, comme il devait le confier un peu plus tard à l'historien Paul Veyne,



consommé de l'opium. On voit à nouveau ici comment la reprise de la scène de la chute du corps philosophique procède par différenciation, au fil du temps, mettant chaque fois en scène des personnages différents : le cavalier tranquille, le promeneur qui enrichit son herbier, le piéton distrait, voire envapé qui traverse en dehors des clous... Version journaliste de l'accident, rapportée par Didier Eribon, le biographe français de Foucault : « Conduit à l'hôpital, il [Foucault] avait demandé qu'on avertisse Simone Signoret, à qui il devait remettre le texte d'une pétition. Quel ne fut pas l'étonnement de l'actrice lorsqu'un policier lui demande au téléphone, en s'excusant de la déranger : 'Il y a un M. Foucault qui voudrait qu'on vous prévienne qu'il a eu un accident'. 'Vous ne savez pas qui il est ?, s'exclame-t-elle. C'est le plus grand philosophe français !' Eribon ne dit pas jusqu'à quel point le policier fut impressionné...

Dans un entretien avec Stephen Riggins, réalisé à Toronto en 1982 (*Dits et Ecrits*, texte 336, IV, p. 534), Foucault va, lui, présenter l'affaire sous un tout autre jour : « Une fois, j'ai été renversé par une voiture dans la rue. Je marchais. Et pendant deux secondes peut-être, j'ai eu l'impression que j'étais en train de mourir, et j'ai éprouvé un plaisir très, très intense. Il faisait un temps merveilleux. C'était vers sept heures, un soir d'été. Le soleil commençait à baisser. A ce jour, cela reste l'un de mes meilleurs souvenirs ».

Revient donc ici avec éclat la petite musique lancinante de l'extase, associée à l'expérience limite, à ce que l'on pourrait appeler l'« impression de mort ». Une extase, un plaisir extrême mais sans durée, celui d'un instant, mais suffisamment intense pour éloigner toute sensation ou représentation associée aux affres de la mort, à l'agonie. Comme Montaigne, comme Rousseau, Foucault insiste sur le caractère de révélation de cette expérience du renversement violent, dans ce qu'elle a d'unique et d'instantané. Il franchit un nouveau palier dans la surenchère en parlant de cet événement comme de *l'un de ses meilleurs souvenirs*.

Cette intensité éprouvée dans l'instant du renversement, il va l'opposer à ce qui s'associe aux plaisirs ordinaires – boire un verre de bon vin, par exemple. L'agrément résultant d'une telle action est bien fade auprès de ce qu'il a ressenti alors. « Un plaisir doit être quelque chose d'incroyablement intense », ajoute-t-il aussitôt, précisant qu'il ne pense pas être le seul à voir les choses ainsi. L'accident, donc, comme figure de l'exception, se présente comme un moment d'intensification de la vie, sans égal, ce qui s'oppose résolument « aux plaisirs intermédiaires qui font la vie de tous les jours » et qui, insiste-t-il, « ne signifient rien pour moi ».

Comme chez Montaigne, l'accident est ici cette expérience personnelle unique qu'un sujet fait de sa propre dissolution, une expérience des confins (de la conscience, du moi, de l'expérience elle-même) mais dans la brèche de laquelle va paradoxalement se découvrir la possibilité d'un partage : « Je ne pense pas être le seul dans ce cas », dit-il, évoquant l'association du plaisir à l'extrême.

L'accident, le renversement violent vont dès lors pouvoir être associés à d'autres circonstances ou pratiques sources de plaisirs intenses – la drogue (inséparable, ici, on l'a vu, de l'épisode en question), mais aussi le sexe, les *backrooms* dont il a découvert l'usage en Californie, etc. Dans le même passage de l'entretien avec Stephen Riggins, il prolonge le récit de l'accident avec cette formule incandescente : « Je voudrais et j'espère mourir d'une overdose de plaisir, quel qu'il soit ». Avec le corps du philosophe, ce sont toutes sortes d'inhibitions, de conventions, de retenues qui « tombent » : le récit de l'accident est pour lui l'occasion de se livrer à cette confiance un peu forte...

Le philosophe renversé puis revenu à lui-même se fait à son tour l'agent d'un radical renversement : il inverse et destitue le récit compassionnel de la « solitude des mourants » dont l'essai (ainsi nommé) de Norbert Elias constitue la version la plus dense. Mourir, bien loin d'être en toutes circonstances, associé à la désolation, peut se transfigurer en ultime expérience de l'excès et de la transgression - « overdose ». Dans sa sulfureuse biographie de Foucault, David Miller mentionne un entretien que Foucault lui aurait accordé, dans lequel ce dernier évoquerait ce même épisode comme une « out-of-body experience » - une formule qui fait signe aussi bien vers l'extase mystique que vers le « voyage » hallucinatoire sous l'effet de drogues. Dans l'édition de poche de son autobiographie de Foucault, Eribon enchaîne directement de l'accident de la rue de Vaugirard sur une autre anecdote : une prise de LSD par Foucault débouchant sur une overdose...

Une rupture de tradition peut en cacher une autre : dans ses remarques succinctes mais étincelantes sur l'accident de la rue de Vaugirard, Foucault ne rompt pas seulement de manière fracassante avec un certain récit traditionnel (chrétien) de la mort qui installe l'agonie du mourant au centre de celle-ci et y associe tous les éléments d'une ritualité spécifique. Il prend aussi congé avec ironie et panache d'avec la tradition antique, cynique ou stoïcienne la plus vénérable pour qui la mort « n'est rien » et ne doit en conséquence faire

l'objet d'aucune crainte particulière ; il affirme au contraire que la mort peut bien être « quelque chose » en s'associant au plaisir le plus extrême ; mais il va même plus loin en retrouvant l'inspiration bataillienne pour suggérer qu'il n'est guère de plaisir authentique, c'est-à-dire délié des conditions de la vie quotidienne, qui ne se trouve par quelque biais associé à la mort. En termes ontologiques, ce n'est pas dans la durée mais dans la brèche du temps que surgit l'éclat de la vérité, c'est dans le moment du choc et de l'interruption (l'accident) que le fond invouable de l'être humain se donne à voir. L'accident, si l'on peut dire, prend ici sa revanche sur la substance. Le Foucault qui, ici, célèbre la gloire de l'accident peut être décrit comme le cousin philosophe du cinéaste qui célèbre les virtualités du crash automobile – David Cronenberg.

Mais voici que, sans crier gare, la mort change de jeu et de visage : le 25 mars 1980, Roland Barthes est renversé par la camionnette d'une entreprise de blanchisserie devant le Collège de France où il se rend pour donner son cours. Il meurt à l'hôpital le lendemain. Plus de « tauromachie » (Michel Leiris) avec la mort, plus d'expérience-limite inopinée avec cette froide banalité de la rencontre mortelle entre le corps fragile du philosophe et le métal de l'automobile. De cette chute-là, c'est nécessairement un autre qui va devoir parler, dans les termes de l'hommage. Evoquant la disparition de son collègue et ami (*Dits et Ecrits IV*, texte 228, pp. 124-5), Foucault parle de « la violence bête des choses, la seule réalité qu'il [Barthes] était capable de haïr » ; il prononce, pour les auditeurs du disparu, un éloge funèbre bien dans sa manière, consistant, pour l'essentiel, moins à louer les qualités de l'homme qu'à renvoyer les auditeurs à la lecture de l'œuvre, restée « seule, désormais ». Autant la quasi-mort, la petite mort simulée du philosophe renversé, évanoui, contusionné et revenu à la philosophie dans l'après-coup de sa méditation est bavarde, autant l'accident fatal survenu à l'ami philosophe se prête peu à la glose : la chute finale du corps du philosophe émancipe en quelque sorte d'œuvre à laquelle s'appliquent d'autres lois de la pesanteur – mais ce n'est pas là, nécessairement le genre de vérité qui se prête à être créée sur les toits au lendemain de la mort violente d'un ami...

Il semblerait donc bien que nous autres philosophes ayons une certaine propension à chuter, ceci dans les circonstances les plus variables, propension avérée tout au long de notre déjà longue histoire. Déplacée du côté d'une

histoire des corps et des accidents susceptibles de les affecter, mais aussi des gestes prolongeant ces affections, l'histoire de la philosophie prend la tournure d'un perpétuel recommencement ou d'un éternel retour de ce moment d'effondrement ou de défaillance : le philosophe était debout, il portait beau, il raisonnait avec assurance – et patatras, le voici par terre, le nez dans la poussière... Au beau récit des origines du discours philosophique assignée à telle ou telle formule sacramentelle – « connais-toi toi-même ! », *cogito ergo sum*, etc. – se substitue la figure d'un perpétuel recommencement prenant la forme d'une reprise ou d'une relance de la pensée, là où un événement inopiné a fait que le sol s'est brusquement déroché sous nos pas.

L'accident détache violemment le sujet philosophique de sa condition et il va lui permettre, dans son après-coup, de révoquer en doute toutes sortes d'évidences durcies, enracinées dans le terreau de l'habitude et de la répétition. Foucault le souligne, la chute accidentelle est un formidable intensificateur de vie, elle produit une ouverture dans laquelle se dévoile tout un champ d'expérience nouveau.

Or, nous le savons bien, c'est tout autant dans le domaine politique que cette figure trouve son champ d'application. L'irrégularité, l'interruption, le choc, le suspens et la chute y sont la condition première pour que se produisent ces salutaires bifurcations à la faveur desquelles se trouve relancée la dynamique de l'émancipation. La chute est alors tout à fait distinctement, la condition de notre métamorphose, d'une relance du principe Espérance, elle cesse absolument de revêtir un sens négatif lorsque nous autres Français, particulièrement, parlons de « chute de l'Ancien régime ». La chute est, dans le cours de l'Histoire, moderne tout particulièrement, le moment suspensif, la coupure dans le creuset de laquelle prennent forme les gestes qui nous arrachent au régime de la répétition en nous donnant le force de différer d'avec notre présent et d'avec nous-mêmes.

Malheur à ceux qui vivent dans la présomption de leur chute impossible ! Nos démocraties se caractérisent entre autres choses par leur souci de se doter de toutes sortes de dispositifs et mécanismes anti-chute, destinés à leur permettre d'échapper aux incertitudes pesant la condition des gouvernants dans les mondes traditionnels, destinés aussi à entretenir la croyance naïve en une sorte de « bout de l'histoire » en forme de démocratisation du monde. Malheur à ceux qui ne trébuchent ni ne tombent jamais ! Leur destin est celui des automates que rien ne détourne de leur chemin : plus dure sera leur chute, au bout du compte !



FUQI TË TRUPIT

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CORPS EN PUISSANCES

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BODIES IN POWER



## De la foule au corps collectif

ERİNÇ ASLANBOĞA

Dans le dictionnaire, le premier sens du mot « foule » renvoie à l'action de « fouler », c'est-à-dire de « comprimer et presser quelque chose en appuyant de façon répétée avec les mains, les pieds ou par un moyen mécanique »<sup>1</sup>. La foule est le résultat de cette action. Le terme est utilisé dans le domaine de l'industrie du textile, du tissage et de l'imprimerie. Dérivé du verbe « fouler », le « fouloir » est à la fois le nom de l'instrument qui sert à fouler les draps, les étoffes, les peaux et celui de l'atelier où se fait cette opération. En outre, dans la terminologie de l'imprimerie, « fouler » est l'action de « presser sur les feuilles qui reçoivent l'impression »<sup>2</sup>. Il s'agit de « laisser une empreinte en relief au verso d'un papier lorsque la pression a été excessive »<sup>3</sup>. Tous ces usages spécifiques du mot « foule » dans le domaine de la technologie et de l'industrie ne sont pas sans lien avec le second sens du mot « foule » qui indique d'abord la presse résultante de la « présence d'une multitude de personnes »<sup>4</sup> et ensuite cette multitude elle-même, la masse. Dans l'épilogue de *L'œuvre d'art à l'époque de sa reproductibilité technique*, Benjamin indique le lien entre « la prolétarianisation croissante de l'homme » et

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1 « Fouler », Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales [En ligne], <http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/fouler> (Page consultée le 28 juillet 2015).

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*



le « développement croissant des masses » comme les deux aspects d'un même processus »<sup>1</sup>.

Suite à leur prolifération dans les grandes villes européennes à la fin du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle, les foules deviennent un sujet qui préoccupe les gouvernants, se transforment en un problème étatique, juridique et sécuritaire. Comment gouverner ces masses disparates dont les nombres, les mouvements et les réactions sont aussi fortuits qu'incontrôlables ? Quels sont les moyens de cerner ces collectivités anonymes qui sont considérées comme une menace pour l'Etat et la paix des « honnêtes » citoyens ?

Ce n'est pas un hasard si les deux premiers domaines qui ont pris les foules comme objet d'étude ont été la criminologie et la psychiatrie. Lombroso avec ses thèses de « criminel-né »<sup>2</sup>, les premiers ouvrages de Sighele, notamment la *Foule délinquante*<sup>3</sup> ont contribué à l'intrusion de la criminologie dans le collectif et à la prolifération de l'image des foules dangereuses, violentes et destructrices. La psychiatisation et la criminalisation des foules, des citadins, des ouvriers ont servi comme instrument afin de les encadrer en les stigmatisant en tant que groupes composés d'individus ayant des instincts pathologiques, démunis de rationalité, de conscience morale et de responsabilité pour l'autre.

La notion de la foule fait référence aux diverses formes d'agglomération humaine. Un groupe rassemblé devant une salle de cinéma, les supporters au stade de foot, les ouvriers en grève, une cohorte d'admirateurs, une manifestation... Hétérogène et versatile, la notion de la foule souffre souvent d'un encadrement trop vaste et réducteur qui brouille ses nuances, qui occulte ses différences en la transformant en un concept fourre-tout. Pourtant, les idées, les objectifs, les fictions atours desquels les foules s'agglomèrent, leurs modes de comportement, le motif de leur rassemblement, les liens qui créent l'attachement des individus à la collectivité, la récurrence et les lieux de leurs regroupements, les événements ou les motifs qui les incitent à être ensemble se distinguent sur de nombreux aspects. Comme disait Maupassant, « toutes ces personnes côte à côte, distinctes, différente de corps, d'esprit, d'intelligence, d'éducation, de passion, de croyances, de préjugés tout à coup, par le seul fait

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- 1 Walter Benjamin, *L'œuvre d'art à l'époque de sa reproductibilité technique*, Paris, Editions Allia, 2004, p. 74.
  - 2 César Lombroso, *L'homme criminel: criminel né - fou moral- épileptique*, traduit sur la 4e édition italienne par MM. Régner et Bournet, Paris, Félix Alcan, 1887.
  - 3 Scipio Sighele, *La foule criminelle: essai de psychologie criminelle*, traduit de l'italien par Paul Vigny, Félix Alcan, 1901.

de leur réunion, forment un être spécial [...] d'une manière de penser nouvelle, commune et qui ne semble nullement formée de la moyenne des opinions de tous. C'est une foule et cette foule est quelqu'un, un vaste individu collectif, aussi distinct d'une autre foule qu'un homme est distinct d'un autre homme »<sup>1</sup>.

Il sera donc réducteur et erroné de proposer une seule définition, un modèle unique de foule qui sera valable pour toutes les autres. Pourtant, les théoriciens ont souvent fait le choix d'insister sur les similitudes des foules plutôt que de discerner leurs différences, de dépister leurs singularités. La mise à l'écart de la tâche de différenciation par G. Lebon, par Freud mais aussi par d'autres théoriciens a produit, en outre, une quasi identification entre la psychologie des foules et celle du fascisme. Selon Adorno, cette association réductrice qui brouille le terrain de la réflexion sur les foules doit être mise en question. « Pourquoi la psychologie appliquée des groupes que nous discutons ici est-elle plus spécifique du fascisme que de la plupart des autres mouvements qui cherchent l'appui des masses ? »<sup>2</sup>.

La confusion, parfois délibérée, entre les diverses formes de foule sert de prétexte aux gouvernants afin de stigmatiser ces foules en tant que pillards, brigands, criminels, et de pénaliser ceux qu'on ne peut gouverner. En Turquie, lors des événements de Gezi<sup>3</sup>, nous avons témoigné de l'usage stratégique de cette confusion délibérée ainsi que de ses conséquences. Afin de décrire la situation, posons plutôt une question : Qu'advient-il lorsqu'un gouvernement proche du fascisme se place dans la position de victime en usant du discours des foules violentes et criminelles ?

En premier lieu, la transformation d'un mouvement de résistance particulièrement calme et pacifique en un autre qui correspondra au modèle des foules criminelles nécessite un effort supplémentaire et continu de la part des gouvernants. Le premier ministre de l'époque qui est le président actuel de

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1 Guy de Maupassant, *Les foules*, texte publié dans Le Gaulois du 23 mars 1882, numérisation et mise en forme HTML (15 mai 2000) par Thierry Selva, <http://maupassant.free.fr/cadre.php?page=oeuvre> (Page consultée le 28 Juillet 2015).

2 Theodor W. Adorno, cité dans S. Moscovici, *L'âge des foules*, Bruxelles, Edition complexe, 1991, p.102.

3 Les événements de Gezi ont débuté à la fin de mai 2013 afin de contrecarrer la construction d'une caserne au milieu de parc Gezi, l'un des rares espaces verts qui se situe dans le quartier de Beyoğlu à Istanbul. Suite aux violentes interventions policières contre les manifestants, le mouvement de la contestation s'est élargi à d'autres villes en Turquie et transformé en une insurrection populaire contre le gouvernement et ses mesures répressives.

la Turquie a fait un travail ardu sur ce sujet afin de créer et de solidifier au sein de l'opinion publique cette image des foules destructrices. Cependant, les déclarations qui reprennent et qui répètent les mêmes thèmes ne sont plus suffisantes pour un public désormais habitué à voir de « vraies » scènes. A l'époque actuelle, la crédibilité des discours est assurée par la production et la diffusion ciblée des images. Ainsi lors de nombreux manifestations et rassemblements qui ont eu lieu depuis Gezi jusqu'alors, les provocateurs, les policiers en civil se sont mis au travail afin de donner de « belles » images de pillage, de vandalisme et de casse. Les caméras de surveillance tombaient en panne pendant que les policiers tabassaient et tuaient les manifestants, celles des chaînes de télévision les plus réputées arrivaient à capter, en gros plan, le jet d'un cocktail Molotov. Par conséquent, non seulement une grande partie de la population est réunie contre un danger supposé – celui des foules criminelles – mais aussi les affaires de corruption dans lesquelles les membres du gouvernement ont été impliqués ont perdu leur crédibilité aux yeux d'une partie de l'opinion publique. La réduction de la collectivité de Gezi, de sa résistance pacifique au modèle des foules destructrices par une désinformation systématique, par le détournement des images et par l'intrusion des provocateurs parmi les résistants fait penser au double mouvement évoqué par Benjamin : « à la reproduction en masse correspond, en effet, une reproduction des masses »<sup>1</sup>.

Dans *Psychologie des foules*, G. Le Bon définit un « caractère moyen de l'individu d'une foule ». Ce caractère est esquissé par le moyen de l'opposer à celui de l'individu isolé, séparé du groupe. Selon Le Bon, sous l'influence du sentiment de l'invincibilité que lui provoque la foule, l'individu s'abandonne aux instincts, perd le sentiment de responsabilité et recourt à des actes irrationnels et violents. Dans *Psychologie collective et analyse du moi*, Freud reprend les thèses de Le Bon et il les reformule dans la terminologie psychanalytique. Selon Freud, ce nouveau caractère qui émerge dans la foule va de pair avec la manifestation de l'inconscient. Lorsque la conscience laisse sa place aux mouvements déchainés des instincts et des pulsions, avec les mots de Freud, « tout ce qu'il y a de mauvais dans l'âme humaine »<sup>2</sup> surgit.

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1 Walter Benjamin, *L'œuvre d'art à l'époque de sa reproductibilité technique*, traduit de l'allemand par Maurice de Gandillac, Paris, Editions Allia, 2004, p. 74.

2 Sigmund Freud, « Psychologie collective et analyse du moi », *Essais de psychanalyse*, traduit de l'allemand par Dr. S. Jankélévitch, Paris, Editons Payot, 1968, ed. électronique réalisé par Gemma Paquet, p. 10.

Le Bon constitue sa théorie sur l'opposition inconciliable et non questionnée entre l'individu et la foule. Pendant que tout ce qui est considéré comme rationnel, conscient, moral, civilisé, normal vont de pair avec l'individu, le domaine de l'irrationnel, de l'inconscient, de l'immoral, du pathologique est réservé à la foule. Dans *Psychologie collective et analyse de moi*, Freud s'accorde avec Le Bon sur la diminution présumée de l'activité mentale et du niveau intellectuel chez l'individu dans la foule. Selon ces auteurs, plus on avance de l'individu vers la masse, plus, avec leur propres termes, on descend de « degré sur l'échelle de civilisation »<sup>1</sup>. Un individu cultivé se transforme en un barbare dans la foule. Dans ce contexte, la foule devient incapable d'une volonté persévérante à cause son caractère impulsif, malléable et dépourvu de sens critique. En plus, Freud crée une analogie entre l'âme des foules et l'âme des primitifs. « Chez les foules, les idées les plus opposées peuvent coexister, sans se gêner mutuellement, sans qu'un conflit résulte de leur contradiction logique. Or, la psychanalyse a montré que tel est également le cas de l'individu enfant et l'individu névrotique »<sup>2</sup>.

Dans ce contexte, nous ne voyons même pas la nécessité de souligner tous les problèmes qu'impliquent les thèses proposées par Le Bon et Freud. Cependant, plutôt que de conserver l'opposition exclusive entre l'individu et la foule – qui, en plus, transporte avec elle-même d'autres formes d'oppositions très problématiques que nous venons de mentionner – il s'agira plutôt de réfléchir sur leur déploiement et cheminement mutuel, sur leur enchevêtrement. La foule ne correspond pas à l'ensemble ou à la somme des individus qui la constitue. De l'autre côté, l'individu isolé dans l'espace de chez soi ou le solitaire parmi la foule ne sont pas réductibles à un état de pure extériorité. En parlant de Baudelaire, de la solitude qu'il éprouvait dès son enfance, « malgré la famille, au milieu des camarades », W. Benjamin souligne que « ce sentiment porte, au-delà de sa signification individuelle, une empreinte sociale »<sup>3</sup>. Ainsi,

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- 1 G. Le Bon, *Psychologie des foules*, cité dans Freud, « Psychologie collective et analyse du moi », *op.cit.* p. 55.
  - 2 Freud, « Psychologie collective et analyse du moi », *op.cit.*, p. 14.
  - 3 « Nous venons de parler d'un promeneur solitaire. Solitaire, Baudelaire l'a été dans l'acceptation la plus atroce du mot. 'Sentiment de solitude, dès mon enfance. Malgré la famille, au milieu des camarades surtout – sentiment de destiné éternellement solitaire.' Ce sentiment porte, au-delà de sa signification individuelle, une empreinte sociale. » Walter Benjamin, « Notes sur les tableaux parisiens de Baudelaire », *Écrits française*, Paris, Gallimard, p. 310.

nous proposons de les penser, l'individu et la foule, dans leur rapport mutuel et non pas réunis en tant que divisés.

Le rapport individu-foule ou individu-masse s'effectue toujours dans un espace/temps qui peut être réel, virtuel, fictif, utopique ou composé de leurs diverses articulations. Sur ce point, ouvrons d'abord une parenthèse pour mentionner la distinction que fait Michel de Certeau entre le « lieu » et l'« espace ». Selon l'auteur de *L'invention du quotidien*, « un lieu est une configuration instantanée des positions »<sup>1</sup>. Donc, « il implique une indication de stabilité » et de l'univocité. En revanche, l'espace renvoie aux « vecteurs de direction », aux « quantités de vitesse » et à la « variabilité de temps », au « croisement des mobiles »<sup>2</sup>. Animé par l'ensemble des mouvements et des orientations, l'espace, avec les mots de De Certeau, est « l'effet produit par les opérations qui l'orientent, le circonstancient, le temporalisent et l'amènent à fonctionner en unité polyvalente de programme conflictuels ou de proximité contractuelles »<sup>3</sup>. Ainsi l'espace est un lieu pratiqué et il existe tant qu'il est pratiqué, habité, transformé. Tout en pensant aux deux sens du mot « foule » que nous avons mentionnés au départ, les rues, les places, les parcs peuvent être considérés comme des supports sur lesquels les foules laissent les traces invisibles de leurs trajectoires. A l'instar des feuilles, les lieux reçoivent l'impression de la presse appliquée par les passants et se transforment en espaces. Ainsi un lieu mesuré, calculé, délimité par les architectes et les urbanistes se transforme en un espace par les habitants, les passants, les fréquenteurs et les errants. Ceci dit, un lieu peut ne pas devenir un espace. Les raisons de son impraticabilité sont diverses et complexes et parfois elles restent indétectables. Il n'est pas toujours facile de dire les raisons pour lesquels un bar est blindé d'habités pendant que l'autre en face reste désert et triste.

La place de Yenikapı, ce polder artificiel récemment fabriqué et inauguré par le premier ministre turc en mars 2014 est un exemple de lieu impraticable, de lieu qui ne se transforme pas en un espace. La place qui se situe sur la côte de la mer Marmara, au sud de la ville d'Istanbul a été aménagée sur un terrain de deux cent soixante-dix mille mètre carré, gagné sur l'eau par le remblai des décombres et des débris provenant de la démolition et de la

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1 Michel de Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien: vol.I arts de faire*, Paris, Gallimard, 1990.

2 *Ibid.*, p.173.

3 *Ibid.*

construction des bâtiments dans le cadre du projet de réaménagement de la ville. Ce nouveau lieu stérile qui est loin du centre-ville et obtenu par l'accumulation des déchets de l'économie immobilière a été configuré et présenté comme le lieu de concert, de rassemblement et de manifestation légale. Grâce à son organisation géométrique ainsi que sa localisation géographique qui facilite le contrôle et la surveillance, la place de Yenikapı a été fabriquée comme alternative à la place Taksim. Contrairement à cette dernière qui est le symbole de la lutte et de la résistance en Turquie, le nouveau lieu en question n'a ni de mémoire ni d'histoire, il est dénudé d'expérience effective. Après les événements de Gezi, le premier ministre a fait ses démonstrations de force dans ce nouveau lieu qui émettait un message à l'inconscient collectif : « nous avons enterré le passé, l'histoire de cette géographie, de la nouvelle Turquie commence maintenant avec nous ».

Au 1<sup>er</sup> mai 2014, le gouvernement turc a interdit toute manifestation qui risque d'avoir lieu au centre-ville et surtout à la place Taksim. L'accès aux places a été bloqué par les policiers, les moyens de transport ont été annulés pendant que les bus et les bateaux qui faisaient le trajet dans la direction de Yenikapı bénéficiaient de tarif jour de fête. Le lendemain, un des journaux avait osé mettre une photo de la place Yenikapı où on voyait une étendue de deux cent soixante-dix mille mètre carré avec un corbeau solitaire au milieu.

Le Paris en voie d'haussmannisation, le Paris de Baudelaire était une ville qui se transformait à une vitesse accrue, avec les mots de Benjamin une ville « minée, défaillante et frêle »<sup>1</sup>. Aujourd'hui à İstanbul, on voit tous les jours l'érection d'un nouveau gratte-ciel sur une couche épaisse de béton. Pendant que les anciens quartiers populaires se transforment en des lieux de résidences luxueux, leurs habitants sont forcés à quitter les centres qui sont désormais réservés à ceux qui travaillent dans les buildings. Contrairement aux discours des gouvernants, la construction de nouveaux circuits routiers, de nouveaux ponts et aéroports est loin de résoudre le problème de la circulation. Les nouveaux lieux résidentiels qui s'agglomèrent autour de ces autoroutes augmentent davantage le nombre d'habitants, poussent les limites de la ville en détruisant les derniers forêts, les bassins versants qui ont subsisté jusqu'alors. Pour ceux qui s'absentent quelques temps d'İstanbul, la ville devient un lieu inconnu et étranger. Dans cette conjoncture, lire le Paris de Baudelaire à travers la documentation détaillée de Benjamin montre l'actualité des pro-

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1 Walter Benjamin, « Notes sur les tableaux parisiens de Baudelaire », *op.cit.*, p.306.

blèmes qu'il a soulevés. En empruntant le terme à Benjamin, Istanbul est au summum de sa période d'« embellissement stratégique »<sup>1</sup> incitée par la spéculation immobilière, légitimée par les discours de progrès, de modernisation et de sécurité.

Même si les espaces urbains sont organisés afin d'encadrer, de diriger les conduites des citadins et des foules, de prévenir leur mouvements et leur direction, d'empêcher ou au contraire de provoquer leur rencontre, il y a et aura toujours des actions conscientes ou moins conscientes qui subvertissent les règles des lieux, qui renversent leurs normes ou qui court-circuitent leur organisation. Autrement dit, les lieux pratiqués impliquent une tension entre obéissance et désobéissance aux normes imposées. Il n'y a pas une seule manière d'habiter un lieu et les limites de ces espaces sont, malgré tout, ouvertes aux transformations. A la lumière de ces précisions, posons une question : Comment un lieu qui est redessiné par une rationalité à la fois sécuritaire et mercantile, avec les mots de Benjamin, un lieu qui est « embelli stratégiquement » peut être contrecarré par différentes manières de l'habiter ?

Nous proposons de réfléchir sur cette question en se référant à la collectivité de Gezi qui s'est formée d'abord par l'occupation d'un parc public portant le nom homonyme et qui s'est étendue et transformée par d'autres formes de résistance tels que des rassemblements et manifestations temporaires de rue, des forums dans les parcs de quartiers, des performances expansives.

Les événements de Gezi ont débuté à la fin de mai 2013 afin de contrecarrer la construction d'une caserne au milieu de parc Gezi, l'un des rares espaces verts qui se situe dans le quartier de Beyoğlu à Istanbul. Suite aux violentes interventions policières contre les manifestants, le mouvement de la contestation s'est élargi à d'autres villes en Turquie et transformé en une insurrection populaire contre le gouvernement et ses mesures répressives. Le premier juin 2013, le parc a été occupé par les résistants qui ont, au fur à mesure, installé des tentes, une bibliothèque, une cuisine, une infirmerie dans lesquels les bénévoles travaillaient à tour de rôle. La collectivité de Gezi, composée de nombreux groupes hétérogènes, issus de couches sociales dissemblables, ayant des passés et des points de vue politiques assez différents, s'est réunie autour du mouvement de la résistance contre le gouvernement. L'occupation du parc Gezi a donné lieu à une expérience singulière de vivre ensemble.

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1 Walter Benjamin, « Haussmannisation, combats de barricades », *Paris capitale du XIXe siècle*, traduit de l'allemand par Jean Lacoste, Paris, Cerf, 2002, p. 154.

Contrairement à un rassemblement politique ou à une manifestation qui tous les deux sont réitérables mais limités dans le temps, la durée de l'occupation d'un lieu public n'est pas défini à l'avance. Pendant que les résistants réclament d'être entendus, attendent une réponse satisfaisante à leurs demandes de la part des gouvernants, le lieu occupé commence à être habité, pratiqué et devient un espace de vie commune tout en transformant ses pratiquants. Ainsi nous pouvons parler d'une expérience effective qui n'est ni prévisible ni définissable à l'avance mais qui se tisse au cours de son évolution. Il ne s'agit pas d'une expérience individuelle même si elle est incorporée par ceux qui l'ont vécue et partagée, ni non plus d'une expérience collective dans laquelle les individus prennent part. L'expérience en question et la transformation qu'elle effectue est celle d'un individu, d'un corps collectif qui doit être pensé dans son devenir propre. Plutôt que l'occupation d'un lieu public, c'est cette expérience de vivre ensemble qui était la plus dérangeante pour les gouvernants.

Lorsque l'occupation du parc a été interrompue par une intervention policière, le corps collectif qui s'est formé a subsisté pendant les manifestations, les forums et les performances expansives. Ce corps collectif a peu en commun avec la description des foules violentes, destructrices, déraisonnables dessinée par les théoriciens que nous avons évoqués plus haut. Au contraire, on se demande : qu'est-ce qui fait que ceux qui se bousculaient l'un et l'autre, il y a peu de temps, dans ces mêmes rues, avec un air indifférent, deviennent d'un coup attentifs, délicats, soigneux dans leurs mouvements et leurs gestes ? On s'excuse lorsqu'on se touche un peu fort, on prend soin de ceux qui sont en difficulté, on court à l'aide de l'autre même pendant les moments de panique et de danger...

Avant de conclure, nous proposons de parler de ce qu'on entend avec la « performance expansive ». Le lendemain de l'opération où les occupants du parc ainsi que les visiteurs ont été expulsés par une intervention extrêmement violente, un homme est resté debout, pendant des heures, sans bouger ni se déplacer, dans un état quasi méditatif, au milieu de la place Taksim, devant le parc Gezi. Son action ou plutôt son inaction était doublement subversive. Car, en premier lieu, elle s'opposait à l'acte de passer qui caractérise le mouvement ininterrompu des villes et des citoyens. Le rapport à la temporalité urbaine était interrompu à la fois par le refus de l'action et de la vitesse. En second lieu, la performance de l'« homme debout » était une réponse silencieuse et extrêmement pacifique à la situation accablante de l'interven-



tion. Car l'opération avait été réalisée dans des conditions particulièrement injustes. Le jour précédent, le gouvernant d'Istanbul avait publiquement déclaré qu'il n'y aura pas d'intervention. Donc le soir même, qui était un samedi, le parc était peuplé de personnes y compris des enfants et des vieux. Contrairement aux autres jours, les gens n'avaient pas pris de précautions. La plupart d'entre eux n'avait ni de masque à gaz, ni de casque ni non plus de produit contre les effets de la bombe lacrymogène. En plus, l'intervention a été réalisée malgré la décision commune de cesser l'occupation du parc et de laisser une tente symbolique à la place. Suite à l'opération, de nombreuses personnes ont été gravement blessées et mises en garde à vue.

Dans ces conditions, il n'y avait plus rien à dire et à faire que de rester inerte. En même temps, cette première performance qui a duré pendant six heures sans interruption symbolisait une force calme et persistante. Il s'agissait également d'un geste qui mettait en scène les policiers déroutés. Ces derniers tournaient autour d'un homme muet, immobile, sans arme et ils ne savaient pas quoi faire avec. Filmé par les passants et déjà vu par des milliers de personnes au bout de quelques heures via le net, le geste de l'« homme debout » se répand. Le lendemain, dans différentes villes en Turquie, on voit des gens figés un peu partout, dans un coin de la rue, devant un magasin, à l'entrée d'une école. Ainsi la collectivité qui s'est formée dans le parc Gezi sort de ses limites géométriques, se dissémine et transforme d'autres lieux en espace pratiqué et habité.

L'expérience du corps collectif qui s'est formé lors de l'occupation du parc Gezi, qui a pris de nouvelles formes dans les forums, à travers les performances expansives est désormais incorporée dans les mémoires et elle effectue un travail silencieux dans les consciences. Pour finir, je voudrais laisser la parole à Benjamin : « Toute expérience originale garde comme enfermés dans son sein certains germes qui sont promis à un développement ultérieur »<sup>1</sup>.

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1 Walter Benjamin, « Notes sur les tableaux parisiens de Baudelaire », *op.cit.*, p. 304.

## Les puissances politiques du cinéma sont corporelles

ALAIN NAZE

Face à certains films, nous éprouvons parfois des difficultés pour énoncer clairement ce qui en constituerait le contenu politique effectif, sans pourtant douter un instant de la teneur politique du film en question. Il ne s'agirait pas alors d'identifier cette apparente indétermination comme le signe d'un manque de clarté chez le cinéaste lui-même (pas nécessairement en tout cas), mais bien comme ce qui nous invite à interroger en profondeur le lien entre cinéma et politique. Si les bonnes intentions ne font pas la bonne littérature, on peut également douter du fait que les seules intentions politiques d'un réalisateur suffisent à produire un cinéma politique. C'est qu'on ne doit jamais oublier que le médium cinématographique repose essentiellement sur la perception, et que chacun de ses effets consiste d'abord à entrer dans un certain rapport de composition avec les affects des spectateurs. La question d'un lien entre cinéma et politique, qui ne soit pas que de surface, mais bien intrinsèque, demande donc la prise en compte du corps – du corps du spectateur, d'abord, quant à la manière dont un film, en effet, peut l'affecter, mais aussi du corps sur l'écran, quant à la manière dont il y est projeté.

Qu'on pense seulement à la congruence du cinéma de Pasolini avec ce qui fut son mot d'ordre : « jeter son corps dans la lutte ». C'est que le contenu politique d'*Accatone*, par exemple, n'est pas ailleurs que dans les corps portés à l'écran (corps pauvres, hétérogènes, plébéiens) et dans la manière, toute

frontale, de les filmer, mais aussi dans ce geste consistant à les magnifier en plaçant en contrepoint de leur lutte un extrait de *la Passion selon saint Matthieu*. En cela, il n'y a nulle thèse qui viendrait écraser l'image, et comme la supprimer, en en révélant la signification. La dimension politique d'*Accatone* peut bien alors être dite intrinsèque au médium cinématographique, et c'est en cela qu'une telle démarche opère un nouage entre politique et corps – le spectateur lui-même étant *affecté* par cette dimension politique, avant même qu'une réflexion critique sur le film puisse seulement être engagée (moment initial auquel la critique elle-même se devra de faire droit, du moins si elle ne veut pas noyer la spécificité du film dans de supposées significations – elles-mêmes hors de l'image – vers lesquelles il renverrait).

Il va donc s'agir ici, non directement chez Pasolini, mais comme dans son sillage si l'on veut (revendiqué ou non, par les réalisateurs évoqués), d'interroger la nature intrinsèquement politique du cinéma, en tant que médium recourant essentiellement aux affects corporels. On comprend que cette interrogation rejaillit sur la politique elle-même, puisque la conception de l'engagement politique comme « prise de conscience » se trouve ainsi remise en question : si le cinéma est intrinsèquement politique à travers le nouage qu'il effectue avec les affects corporels, alors la politique dont il s'agit devient politique des corps, non comme le signe d'une politique désertée par la pensée, mais comme celui de l'actualisation d'une pensée du corps.

Pour commencer, n'oublions pas de faire remarquer que ce jeu d'affects mis en œuvre par le cinéma n'opère pas indépendamment des affects du cinéaste lui-même, voire de son propre corps. On peut penser aux multiples interventions du corps de Pasolini, comme personnage de ses propres films, mais aussi à celles de Fassbinder, dont le corps n'est pas moins présent dans sa filmographie. On peut également envisager la manière de faire du cinéma une forme d'autobiographie filmée, qui fut celle de Pierre Clémenti, et qui continue, par exemple, à être celle d'un Lionel Soukaz. Dans tous ces cas, on retrouve l'implication personnelle du cinéaste, qui vaut comme engagement politique, à travers son propre corps – et c'est d'ailleurs ce nouage entre corps et politique, précisément, qui permet de ne pas considérer *a priori* l'autobiographie filmée comme un repli sur la sphère privée, voire comme une simple forme de narcissisme. Et si engagement politique il y a en ces occasions, on doit reconnaître au corps du cinéaste la capacité de jouer le rôle d'interface entre le

film et les spectateurs : à la place d'un contenu politique directement énoncé (éventuellement par le recours à la voix *off*, ou au moyen d'un personnage porte-parole des intentions du réalisateur), on se trouve face à la *présence*, physique, du cinéaste (en chair et en os à l'écran, ou seulement comme ce corps derrière la caméra), laquelle confère alors à son engagement politique une dimension d'immanence vis-à-vis du médium cinématographique.

C'est que le fait de ne pas recourir à un discours transcendant (quelles que puissent en être les formes d'activation), qui viendrait délivrer la signification de ce qui est donné à voir, ne signifie cependant aucunement un retour à une conception platement positiviste du cinéma : il y a bien un point de vue singulier qui est celui du cinéaste. Seulement, le fait de ne pas employer des moyens hétérogènes au cinéma pour exprimer ce point de vue est la seule manière de justifier le recours au médium cinématographique. Sans cela, c'est le film lui-même qui s'avère inutile, ou au mieux seulement illustratif, si un propos, énonçant le sens des images, peut, sans perte, lui être substitué. Mais il faut aller encore un peu plus loin. En effet, il est très possible de transposer dans le cadre d'une grammaire cinématographique un discours maintenant une transcendance à l'œuvre dans le film, malgré l'obéissance apparente au principe d'immanence existant entre l'image et le sens. C'est bien ainsi que Eisenstein procède, notamment lorsqu'il veut produire une image détestable du *Lumpenproletariat* : outre la pratique du *typage*, il fait en sorte que certains acteurs - assimilés dans leur rôle, au moyen de cartons, à des animaux nuisibles - miment en effet la fourberie, la cupidité, la sournoiserie, etc. Les personnages en question, à l'écran, deviennent alors de simples corps théoriques, leur physionomie même étant censée renvoyer à des qualités morales négatives – qualités négatives délivrant alors la signification de ces corps. L'image, dans ce cas, devient simple *moyen* pour un propos théorique, en l'occurrence globalement calqué sur la vision violemment négative du sous-prolétariat que Marx a pu développer. Si, donc, le corps revêt en effet une place centrale dans le cinéma d'Eisenstein, il paraît pourtant bien difficile de soutenir qu'en cela la politique se ferait corporelle, par l'intermédiaire de son cinéma. Pouvoir énoncer cela supposerait que le cinéma donne alors à voir des corps pour eux-mêmes, et non d'abord pour la charge symbolique dont ils pourraient être les porteurs. Le corps de Franco Citti ne *représente* pas le sous-prolétariat, dans *Accatone*, il n'en est pas une métaphore, mais il *est* bel et bien un corps pauvre, il l'*incarne*, au sens fort du terme.

Il ne s'agit évidemment pas de nier en cela le fait que l'image cinématographique donne en effet à voir autre chose que le calque de ce que la réalité elle-même nous donne continuellement à percevoir, et qu'ainsi elle nous révèle bien plutôt le monde dans lequel nous vivons, nous le rendant visible. S'il faut donc éviter l'écueil de la réduction des choses du monde à un statut de simple métaphore, il faut tout autant se méfier du risque de laisser les choses n'être à l'écran que dans l'état de positivité qui leur est propre en-dehors de leur enregistrement par l'œil de la caméra. C'est bien ce qu'énonçait dans un entretien le réalisateur Robert Kramer : « Si les choses sont trop concrètes, elles sont perdues dans cette qualité concrète – elles sont cet événement spécifique, cet objet spécifique qui a *cette* existence dans *ce* temps-là. Et si les choses sont trop abstraites, elles deviennent abstraites. Quelque part, entre les deux, il y a les mythes, il y a une chose qui vibre avec tout son sens concret, et tout son sens mythique »<sup>1</sup>. Il s'agirait donc d'éviter de réduire la chose filmée à son seul caractère quotidiennement vécu, car alors le cinéma se limiterait à n'être qu'un véhicule pour une image déjà donnée dans la réalité, mais il s'agirait tout autant d'éviter d'en faire une stricte chose mentale. Or, cet écart entre les deux, que Robert Kramer nomme « mythe », ce n'est rien de très mystérieux, sinon la trace de la palpitation même du monde, lorsque la caméra filmant les choses, ne se contente pas, bien entendu, de les enregistrer passivement, mais les *vit* en fait toujours aussi à travers le corps voyant du cameraman, avec les significations que ce corps même (avec toute sa mémoire) attache aux objets perçus. La composante autobiographique de l'œuvre de Robert Kramer est ainsi d'emblée débordée, notamment par la représentation qu'il se fait du temps, celui de la biographie étant ainsi sans cesse repris dans celui de l'histoire, comme c'est le cas, en particulier, dans son film *Berlin 10/90*, tourné pour la télévision le 15 octobre 1990, dont le texte du commentaire énonce, sur des images de Berlin-est : « Les musées... Et les ruines. Les ruines de beaucoup de rêves. Les squelettes de beaucoup de rêves, les carcasses sont restées là. Mon père a étudié la médecine de 1930 à 1933, à la Charité, un grand hôpital, ce doit être à 5 minutes d'ici à pied. Je ne sais pas si le grand bâtiment est le nouvel hôpital ou non. Impacts de balles. Tous les murs portent des impacts de balles [...] signes des batailles de 45, à l'avancée des Russes. Traces d'histoire... Impacts de balles... La vraie

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1 Robert Kramer, entretien figurant dans le film *Itinéraire d'un film-maker*, de Anne Marie Lallement, DVD K Film, 2000.

histoire [...] Impacts dans mon corps. Il [mon père] ne m'a jamais raconté. [...] C'est pour ça que je reviens sans cesse au *Reichstag* ». La positivité de l'image se creuse donc sans cesse, non pas par le détour d'un commentaire qui destituerait plutôt cette image en nous en détournant (en dévoilant la supposée signification, alors posée comme hors du domaine du strictement visible), mais en ceci que c'est l'image elle-même qui révèle l'épaisseur temporelle venue se cristalliser *visiblement* dans les choses elles-mêmes. C'est en ce sens que Robert Kramer peut affirmer, dans la même interview, que ce qui l'intéresse dans le cinéma, et notamment dans la forme des « lettres vidéo », c'est la question : « Comment abolir encore un tout petit peu plus la séparation entre filmer et vivre ? »<sup>1</sup>.

Si les choses filmées ne sont donc pas exactement les choses vécues dans l'existence ordinaire, cela ne signifie pourtant pas que le cinéma placerait ainsi le monde à distance, mais, tout au contraire, que le cinéma nous reconduit au cœur même du monde, mais dans toute son épaisseur, notamment temporelle, en en révélant les couches sédimentées juste sous la surface, en en ravivant les couleurs, en réactivant le désir nous portant vers lui : « [...] vivre comme vivre, c'est pas que c'est insupportable, mais c'est un peu plat »<sup>2</sup>. Or, le cinéma comme moyen d'enflammer le monde, d'en révéler à nouveau le caractère désirable, c'est bien là le moteur, politique, du cinéma de Lionel Soukaz, engagé contre toute forme d'empêchement à déployer sa propre puissance.

L'omniprésence du corps du cinéaste, dans nombre de films de Lionel Soukaz, nous conduit tout naturellement à interroger la notion même de *représentation*, notamment dans le cas du film *Ixe*, de 1980, dont on va parler un peu ici. C'est qu'en effet le corps du cinéaste, de surcroît dévoilé jusqu'en son intimité, déstabilise le spectateur, en le plaçant dans une position de face à face, comme on pourrait en retrouver le geste dans certaines performances d'Esther Ferrer (par exemple dans le cadre de ses expériences d'autoportraits, ou encore dans celles de la nudité<sup>3</sup>) : ne disposant plus de la quiétude du

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1 *Id.*

2 *Id.*

3 Notamment dans la performance intitulée *Encore une performance ?!*, réalisée au Centre Pompidou, à Paris, en 2010, et dont la captation est consultable en ligne : <http://www.centrepompidou.fr>

simple récepteur d'un spectacle qui lui est adressé, le spectateur du cinéma de Soukaz devient celui qui se doit, d'une manière ou d'une autre, de répondre au regard qui, de l'écran, lui est adressé. Cette interpellation conduit le spectateur à un rôle actif, loin de le conforter dans l'attitude de qui peut prendre position, intellectuellement, sans s'engager corps et bien. A cet égard, *Ixe* est tout à fait symptomatique de cette démarche consistant à lier politique et corps, notamment en ce que ce film sur la question de la censure ne se contente pas d'interpeller le spectateur sur le thème de la liberté d'expression, mais le place en face d'images possiblement dérangeantes, au point, stratégiquement parlant, de mettre en question l'efficacité de la démarche – mais, politiquement, la démarche est radicale et ainsi justifiée. C'est qu'il serait facile d'obtenir une opposition verbale à la pratique de la censure, mais la victoire ne manquerait pas d'avoir un goût amer, obtenue seulement en ne montrant pas les images relativement auxquelles on demande la levée de la censure... C'est ainsi qu'il aurait été facile de faire jouer la distinction légale entre érotisme et pornographie, quand *Ixe*, pourtant, choisit de montrer des sexes en érection. En cela, c'est le souci de la respectabilité qui est abandonné par Lionel Soukaz, qui sait trop bien le prix qu'on est conduit à payer pour d'apparentes victoires politiques, n'ayant en fait été obtenues qu'à la condition de cacher ces corps qu'on ne saurait voir.

Sans décrire longuement *Ixe*, le film de Lionel Soukaz, on peut tout de même préciser qu'il s'agit là d'un film non narratif, dépourvu de voix *off*, et composé de séquences filmées (et de photographies) articulées entre elles selon un montage syncopé, et sur une bande-son très travaillée, alternant musique, chansons, rire sardonique en leitmotiv, etc. Un mot revient lui-même comme un leitmotiv, d'abord sur une affiche, et c'est le mot « Vivre », citant le titre du film de Kurosawa. On comprend donc que *Ixe* constitue une sollicitation continue de la vue et de l'ouïe, avec un retour périodique de certaines images et/ou sons, parfois selon des vitesses variables, ou selon des enchaînements variés, comme une façon de désamorcer les conditions ordinaires de la perception, peut-être de les pousser jusqu'à l'outrance. Certaines images apparaissent d'abord de manière quasiment subliminale, avant que de s'installer plus durablement sur l'écran (c'est le cas des scènes de fellation, puis de sodomie par exemple), comme une manière de susciter éventuellement le désir chez le spectateur, en tout cas de l'impliquer dans un questionnement relatif au désir, en jouant à la fois sur la frustration,

mais aussi sur le caractère obsessionnel de ces séquences brèves revenant périodiquement. Relevons que le corps de Lionel Soukaz a une place centrale dans tout ce dispositif, et que, par conséquent, le spectateur ne pouvant que rencontrer le regard du cinéaste sur l'écran, il se trouve ainsi impliqué dans le dévoilement de son intimité. Nombre de passages du film mériteraient d'être évoqués, mais sa richesse ne permet, ici, que de mentionner certains motifs : l'œil du cinéaste, filmé en gros plan, et ouvrant d'abord sur des images de manifestants opposés aux CRS, puis sur le corps du cinéaste lui-même ; autre gros plan sur l'œil de Soukaz, suivi d'un gros plan sur sa bouche, puis sur sa poitrine, et ensuite, en contrepoint, des photos de corps masculins enlacés, puis des scènes de fellation, et la bande sonore retravaillée fait entendre et bégayer la célèbre chanson des « Sœurs sourire », « Dominique, nique, nique », avec ensuite en contrepoint d'autres scènes de fellation, et parallèlement, des images du Pape. On retrouvera ce motif de l'œil à la fin du film, lorsque Lionel Soukaz sera censé succomber à une overdose (tous les détails de l'injection d'héroïne auront auparavant été montrés à l'écran), et qu'on lui fermera les yeux. Au leitmotiv « Vivre » correspond donc l'œil grand ouvert (qui est aussi celui de la caméra, comme en un clin d'œil au *Chien andalou*), par lequel s'introduit tout l'univers du visible, support des pulsions scopiques. On comprend alors que filmer, voir et vivre s'entre-répondent dans cette optique (vivre à en mourir), en opposition à la censure comme interdiction du regard, mort. Filmer, c'est donc tout simplement vivre, mais selon un rythme, selon une vitesse et à travers des couleurs et des sons plus intenses et/ou autrement agencés.

Cela (c'est-à-dire cette signification du film), on le comprend sans doute d'abord au moyen des affects de joie que son film produit (par le recours à l'humour, mais aussi par l'irruption d'images pouvant déclencher certains désirs, et/ou provoquer une gêne, ou encore par le retour périodique de certains refrains), et c'est donc bien ainsi que son cinéma s'avère éminemment politique : lorsqu'il donne à voir et à entendre tout un univers de déambulations nocturnes – au moyen d'un travelling sur des grilles qui défilent, puis au moyen d'une plongée sur des pieds avançant sur un trottoir, tout cela sur fond d'un montage syncopé et d'un refrain qui énonce « en route, vers de nouvelles aventures » - il ouvre ainsi la voie à des rencontres aventureuses, propres à la drague homosexuelle. Ainsi, à travers les seuls moyens du cinéma, Lionel Soukaz parvient ici à faire valoir les arguments les plus puissants contre la normalisation contemporaine de la vie gay, uniquement au moyen d'une



intensification / déstabilisation perceptive produite autour du signifiant lancinant de « Vivre ». On peut donc bien dire qu'un film revêt une portée politique, lorsque au-delà (ou en deçà) de l'éventuel propos explicitement politique, il produit, cinématographiquement parlant, quelque chose qui n'est pas sans rapport avec l'enthousiasme. C'est aussi tout le danger de ce médium, bien sûr : il n'y a pas de politique sans désir(s), ce qui implique que s'il y a un cinéma politique – ou, mieux, puisque le cinéma est essentiellement politique –, il réside dans la nature des états corporels (dans toute l'extension que Spinoza pouvait conférer au terme de « corps ») qu'il saura déclencher.

Que le cinéma soit essentiellement politique à travers les affects corporels qu'il est susceptible de déclencher, cela ne doit pourtant pas nous conduire à rejeter d'emblée, comme n'étant politiques que de façon dérivée, les films susceptibles, par exemple, de recourir à la voix *off*, et qui, donc, ne paraissent pas s'en tenir, strictement parlant, aux seules ressources de l'image cinématographique. C'est qu'en effet le discours, au cinéma, n'est aucunement condamné à se faire nécessairement l'ennemi des affects corporels, spécifiquement cinématographiques, même lorsqu'il ne relève pas d'une situation de dialogue – si la situation dans laquelle s'inscrit le film n'est pas compréhensible sans une explication que les images, seules, ne sauraient fournir, alors le discours se révèle l'allié des affects dont les images sont virtuellement porteuses. Seul le discours rendant les images superflues serait donc à bannir. Le cinéma de Yann Le Masson nous permet d'interroger cette dimension de la question à travers la tension qui s'y joue, parfois, entre images et voix *off*.

Parmi les films réalisés par le documentariste Yann Le Masson, deux d'entre eux me semblent devoir être ici privilégiés, pour les choix dont ils sont porteurs, relativement à la question de la voix *off*, en tant que commentaire des images, mais aussi plus généralement quant au traitement de la parole. C'est que ces films présentent certaines des caractéristiques par lesquelles on cherche ici à penser un cinéma essentiellement corporel, c'est-à-dire n'opérant pas le détour par une parole venant recouvrir le visible et/ou l'audible, mais aussi, parce que ces films présentent, notamment pour le cas de *Kashima Paradise*, certains traits de résistance à l'égard du simple fait de montrer. Car s'il est entendu que tout film résulte inévitablement d'une construction,

résultant de choix de tournage, de montage, etc., la résistance que j'évoque ici est celle par laquelle le cinéaste peut hésiter à se défaire du rôle d'interprète des images, au-delà des choix techniques qu'il ne peut pas ne pas effectuer, et qui, étant en eux-mêmes porteurs de choix politiques, esthétiques, éthiques, influencent déjà la signification d'un film.

Le film *J'ai huit ans*, réalisé en 1961, a été projeté à Paris le 10 février 1962, soit donc en pleine guerre d'Algérie. La dimension militante du film ne fait donc aucun doute, d'autant que le cinéaste lui-même se trouvait pleinement engagé dans cette guerre, à la fois en tant que militant communiste, mais aussi en tant qu'ancien officier parachutiste ayant effectué son service militaire entre 1955 et 1958, cherchant en effet, selon la logique du Parti communiste, à être au plus près des masses, tout en visant le plus haut grade pour influencer sur les formes d'agitation politique – d'où le déchirement pour lui de devoir combattre des hommes dont il partageait l'idéal. Le film lui-même est composé dans un premier temps de plans de visages d'enfants algériens (images tournées en Tunisie) sur une bande-son laissant entendre des tirs de fusils et de mitraillettes, et dans un second temps de dessins d'enfants représentant la guerre qu'ils vivaient, accompagnés d'une voix *off* qui est celle de ces enfants, énonçant des bribes de récits entrant en écho avec les dessins projetés sur l'écran. Et, en résonance avec les images, les paroles de ces enfants sont bouleversantes, qui énoncent le meurtre de leur père, de leur cousin, de leur grand-père, ou encore leur angoisse à l'approche des soldats français. Ce film, selon les mots de Yann Le Masson, « visait à faire entrer le spectateur dans l'univers traumatisé de ces gosses »<sup>1</sup>. Le film est donc politique en son intention, mais il l'est selon des moyens essentiellement cinématographiques, et c'est en cela que la politique dont il pourrait se réclamer peut, me semble-t-il à bon droit, être nommée corporelle. En effet, la voix *off* étant celle des enfants eux-mêmes, elle constitue un élément de ce bloc de réalité pour lequel le cinéaste témoigne, loin d'être la parole, transcendante, qui dirait le sens des images. Le fait même que ces enfants s'expriment dans une langue parfois hésitante constitue un élément inséparable de ce dont portent témoignage les dessins, en l'occurrence la violence par laquelle les colons leur ont imposé la langue française. Pour le dire simplement, il n'y a rien, dans

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1 Yann Le Masson, « Le Baobab », texte extrait du livret joint au coffret DVD *Kashima Paradise, le cinéma de Yann Le Masson*, Editions Montparnasse, 2011, p.6.

ce film, qui puisse être transposé dans un discours extérieur au film, et qui en délivrerait le sens – cette signification est en effet inséparable des affects déclenchés lors du visionnage du film, et toute tentative pour énoncer, hors film, cette signification aboutirait à une froide production de l'intelligence, qui manquerait une dimension essentielle de la réalité révélée par ce film. Ces remarques pourraient d'ailleurs être élargies au film *Sucre amer*, de 1963, dans lequel Yann Le Masson parvient à créer tout un jeu d'affects, et ce, essentiellement en filmant les corps des personnes venues assister aux différents meetings : d'un côté la conviction d'appartenir à « la noble et vieille civilisation française », qui donne cette assurance aux supporters blancs de la candidature de Michel Debré à la Réunion, lorsqu'ils entonnent la Marseillaise, et de l'autre côté, la volonté de ne plus courber l'échine, de ne plus céder aux menaces des puissants, qui conduit une femme à essuyer les larmes qui lui sont venues en écoutant un orateur du Parti communiste parler de dignité et prôner l'indépendance, et qui conduit enfin le groupe à entonner une vibrante *Internationale*. L'opposition peut paraître binaire, mais elle vise précisément à révéler ce qui n'apparaît jamais aussi nettement dans l'existence ordinaire, et qui pourtant sous-tend bien l'ensemble des rapports sociaux sur l'île – les rapports de maîtres à serviteurs. C'est bien en cela que ce film est essentiellement politique, à travers l'évidence dans laquelle se retrouve le spectateur, qui lui fait distinguer, sans hésitation, l'ami de l'ennemi. Ce film n'est donc nullement objectif, étant politique, et plus précisément, il est politique selon certains affects, strictement opposés à ceux que déploierait un autre film, tout aussi politique, mais qui aurait fait le choix de l'autre camp. Pour ce que pourraient être les affects propres à un cinéma fasciste, qu'on pense seulement au film de Giovanni Guareschi, qui se voulait un pendant au film *La rabbia*, de Pasolini, et qui va notamment donner à voir des danses africaines sur une musique de cirque...

Si j'é mets quelques réserves à l'encontre du film *Kashima Paradise*, ce n'est donc pas au nom de l'objectivité entendue comme neutralité. Ce film est en effet engagé (contre une installation pétrolière qui aboutirait à polluer l'environnement maritime, et contre le projet d'un aéroport international, à Narita), et c'est même ce qui en fait tout le prix. En revanche, cette fois, du moins dans certains passages du film, Yann Le Masson me semble suivre une autre direction, qui est celle de l'interprétation de la réalité, à partir d'une grille de lecture (marxiste en l'occurrence) menaçant de masquer les images elles-mêmes. Il ne s'agit évidemment pas de se donner le ridicule consistant

à reprocher au cinéaste son engagement communiste, pas plus que de lui faire grief de la présence de la voix *off* en tant que telle, la voix de Georges Rouquier permettant, au contraire, de saisir le sens de bien des images, à travers la contextualisation qu'elle opère, relativement à la réalité japonaise, qui s'avérerait souvent bien opaque, si ces images n'étaient accompagnées du décryptage les rendant seulement lisibles. Ce que je vise bien plutôt ici, c'est le type de commentaire qui intervient notamment à propos du système complexe de don et contre-don qui régissait alors de manière extrêmement rigoureuse les structures de l'échange au Japon. En effet, à cette occasion, la voix *off* ne se contente pas d'explicitier les règles de l'échange, s'interrogeant plutôt, et ce, de façon tout à fait rhétorique, sur le fait de savoir à *qui* profite le maintien de traditions aussi rigides, réclamant qu'on y consacre un temps tellement important qu'elles éloignent des vraies questions sociales. La grille de lecture est alors transparente : les classes possédantes ont intérêt à maintenir les travailleurs dans un système d'échange aussi rigidement codifié, car cela empêche de remettre en cause la structure même de la répartition des richesses. Qu'en cela le commentaire puisse toucher plus ou moins juste, ce n'est même pas la question – cette grille de lecture imposée à la réalité empêche cette dernière de se donner dans sa singularité, la réalité étant alors bien plutôt reconduite à celle d'une société capitaliste, dont les rouages diffèrent certes localement, mais obéissent globalement partout à la même logique. Cette fois, par l'écart de l'interprétation, on manque ce qui se donnait à voir dans ces pratiques d'échange, notamment dans le cadre de l'épisode d'un enterrement – la grille de lecture tend à rendre le spectateur inattentif au système d'échange qui se manifeste à cette occasion, lequel n'y voit plus alors que l'élément d'un vaste dispositif d'aliénation des masses. Dans un entretien accordé à *Positif*, en 1975, Yann Le Masson revendique bien cet écart interprétatif : « Si on essaie de définir le type de film auquel appartient *Kashima Paradise*, précisément c'est un documentaire, mais dans lequel on ne se contente pas de laisser aux gens, aux événements, la parole : on jette nous-mêmes un regard critique et on l'interprète selon une certaine analyse, autrement dit on ne cherche pas à être objectif, on cherche à être politique »<sup>1</sup>. Or, le cinéaste n'était pas plus objectif ni moins politique dans les deux autres

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1 Y. Le Masson, « C'est un nouveau type de cinéma qu'il s'agit d'inventer », extrait d'un entretien de 1975, avec Hubert Niogret, pour la revue *Positif*, et repris dans le livret joint au coffret DVD *Kashima Paradise*, le cinéma de Yann Le Masson, *op. cit.*, p.23.

films qu'on a évoqués, et le problème, cette fois, c'est que Le Masson fait intervenir la catégorie de l'idéologie, ce qui constitue un piège radical pour son cinéma. En effet, il en vient à se donner pour tâche de « trouver une certaine réalité derrière les masques »<sup>1</sup>, ce qui conduit inévitablement les images elles-mêmes à se charger d'un statut de possible reflet inconsistant d'une vérité à porter au jour. Car si le cinéaste reconnaît aussi au cinéma le statut d'idéologie, il ne renonce pourtant pas à cette tâche qui consisterait à « aller au fond des choses, donner de véritables analyses, poser des questions, [toutes choses supposant] un travail exigeant, de longue haleine, *une véritable activité scientifique* »<sup>2</sup>.

Le risque est alors grand que le cinéma en question devienne un cinéma ayant cessé de voir le réel, ou plutôt ne le voyant plus qu'à travers une interprétation « scientifique » le ravalant au statut de reflet trompeur, ou de parole aliénée – heureusement, le discours rétrospectif du cinéaste va plus loin dans cette direction que sa pratique, pour l'essentiel nettement plus intéressante que ce qu'il en dit, notamment en ce qui concerne *Kashima Paradise*.

Pour finir, indiquons que l'idée selon laquelle le cinéma ne serait jamais aussi politique que lorsqu'il l'est de manière intrinsèque, à travers les seuls moyens du médium cinématographique lui-même, est peut-être mise en œuvre de la manière la plus éclatante à travers le cinéma *underground* de Jonas Mekas, même si, spontanément, on ne le classerait peut-être pas du côté des cinéastes explicitement « politiques ». Qu'on songe seulement à son superbe film de 2000, *As I was moving ahead occasionally I saw brief glimpses of beauty*. Un des leitmotiv traversant cette œuvre est : « Ceci est un film politique ». Or, il s'agit, à travers ces images, de donner à voir avant tout des scènes de la vie quotidienne, des petits événements sans grande importance, autrement dit, ce que Walter Benjamin aurait appelé le « rebut ». De ce premier point de vue, son cinéma est politique, étant celui d'un « chiffonnier de l'histoire », jusqu'en son refus de mettre en place un fil conducteur, un récit, qui enchaînerait ces éclats – de cette façon, ce sont bien les puissances politiques du cinéma en

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1 *Id.*, p.24.

2 *Id.* (je souligne).

tant que tel que révèle Mekas, et que Giorgio Agamben, de son côté, à propos du cinéma de Guy Debord en l'occurrence, qualifie ainsi : « On pourrait reprendre la définition de Valéry et dire du cinéma, du moins d'un certain cinéma, qu'il est une hésitation prolongée entre l'image et le sens. Il ne s'agit pas d'un arrêt au sens d'une pause, chronologique, c'est plutôt une puissance d'arrêt qui travaille l'image elle-même, qui la soustrait au pouvoir narratif pour l'exposer en tant que telle »<sup>1</sup>. C'est en cela que cette façon non narrative de faire du cinéma est aussi une affaire de montage (à l'image du livre de Benjamin sur les Passages parisiens n'ayant d'autre objet que d'utiliser les « guenilles » recueillies, simplement en les montrant) - même si, de façon plus essentielle mais non contradictoire, le cinéma de Mekas est sans doute davantage un cinéma de tournage -, et non pas de jugement, d'imposition d'un sens, comme le dit Mekas lui-même, sur la bande-son de ce film de 2000 : « Souvenirs... Souvenirs... Souvenirs. Picturaux, sonores... Souvenirs... Pas de jugement ici, positif, négatif, bon ou mauvais. Ce sont juste des images et des sons très innocents et seuls, tandis qu'ils passent... tandis qu'ils vont et viennent, très, très innocents ». Contrairement aux formes traditionnelles de l'expression, Mekas ne cherche pas à faire disparaître le médium dans l'image qu'il nous donne à voir, mais bien à faire en sorte que, selon les mots d'Agamben, « [l]'image se donne elle-même à voir au lieu de disparaître dans ce qu'elle nous donne à voir », car c'est alors ce qui fait de l'image un « moyen pur »<sup>2</sup>. C'est bien ce qui permet de comprendre ces mots de Mekas, toujours dans le même film : « [...] vous vous attendez à en apprendre plus sur le protagoniste, c'est-à-dire moi, le protagoniste de ce film. Je ne veux pas vous décevoir. Tout ce que je veux dire est ici. Je suis dans toutes les images de ce film, je suis dans chaque photogramme de ce film ».

Politique, le cinéma de Mekas l'est aussi en un second sens, qui nous conduit au cœur de l'articulation entre cinéma, politique et corps. Son autobiographie filmée s'attachant en effet à des événements minces (on vient de le dire), sans souci de les subordonner à un projet de signification, ceci implique par conséquent que le cinéma de Mekas ne reçoit pas son sens d'un sujet conscient et lui-même hors médium – tout au contraire, « le sujet s'exprime dans un corps livré à la sensation, principe unificateur d'une pensée

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1 Giorgio Agamben, « Le cinéma de Guy Debord », in *Image et mémoire*, Paris, Editions Hoëbeke, 1998, p.72-73.

2 *Id.*, p.75.

et d'une vision fragmentée », résume Vincent Deville<sup>1</sup>, qui enchaîne sur une citation du cinéaste : « Et chaque image, chaque photogramme capte non seulement ce qui est devant la caméra ou devant l'objectif mais aussi tout ce qui est dans mon cœur, dans mon cerveau, dans toutes les cellules de mon corps » - c'est là que le cinéma de Mekas se révèle un cinéma de tournage, avec un corps voyant appareillé d'une caméra, faisant corps avec elle, filmant sans aucune délibération préalable autour d'un plan de tournage. C'est de cette façon que peut finir par prendre corps l'idée selon laquelle un cinéma intrinsèquement politique ne peut qu'ouvrir sur une politique des corps, c'est-à-dire sur une politique qui ne relève plus d'un projet transcendant, d'une *idée*, mais qui se fait *geste*, comme l'énonce très clairement Giorgio Agamben : « Ayant pour centre le geste et non l'image, le cinéma appartient essentiellement à l'ordre éthique et politique (et non pas simplement à l'ordre esthétique) »<sup>2</sup>. Le cinéma expérimental est le mieux disposé pour nous enseigner cette dimension essentiellement *gestuelle* du cinéma, ce qui ne signifie pas que des films qui sacrifieraient au moins partiellement à la convention narrative soient nécessairement privés de toute possibilité de mise en œuvre d'un tel lien intrinsèque entre cinéma et politique – les formes possibles d'actualisation des puissances politiques du cinéma sont multiples, et peuvent surgir (parfois très ponctuellement) à peu près partout, pour autant qu'un cinéaste ne sous-utilise pas l'appareil cinématographique, c'est-à-dire pour autant qu'il n'oublie pas le complexe de percepts et d'affects que le corps du cinéaste transmet à la caméra.

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1 Vincent Deville, in Antoine de Baecque, Philippe Chevallier dir., *Dictionnaire de la pensée du cinéma*, Paris, PUF, 2012, p.432.

2 G. Agamben, *Moyens sans fins*, Paris, Payot & Rivages, 1995, p.67.

## Mind the social gap. Which space for pervert bodies ?

CÉLINE BELLEDENT

From the slogan “*my body belongs to me*” and women burning their bra, to the Lesbians of Color strong statements against racism and white eurocentrism inside the feminist and lesbian movements, *passing* by the high heels used as weapons in the trans and homosexual riots of Stonewall, feminist as well as sexual minorities scholars and activists have been considering in many different ways and aspects the body as a starting point for developing political actions, sites of resistances and thoughts.

Many of these claims have been formulated, received and answered in their respective societies as demands for rights in legal terms : right of abortion, right of gay and lesbian marriage... Even though these changes of law improve life conditions of some, they don't challenge the epistemological and political systems which lock some people in their bodies and keep on producing minorized bodies. When I speak about minority I don't speak about people who would be less numerous, I speak in terms of deficit of power on economical, legal, political and social levels. It is a “*disproportion of being*”, to quote the expression of Colette Guillaumin, 1972, and not a deficit of number that is at stake, when sexual minorities will be referred to.

Feminist and sexual minorities claims are publically and sociologically mostly understood as specific and communitarian: women emancipation,



homosexual particularism... Focusing on the body, and proceeding from a feminist epistemology, I would like to grasp some political complexities and social implications of what I call : *the pervert body*.

The term “pervert” implies a movement, a direction and its distortions. The **Oxford Dictionary online** defines pervert as : “*1- distort or corrupt the original course, meaning, or state of (something) ; 2- lead (someone) away from what is considered natural or acceptable; 3- sexually abnormal and unacceptable*”. “*Natural, acceptable*”, or their contraries, when it comes to bodies and to sexuality, neither the direction, nor its deviances can be sociologically considered as natural, evident. In a first step, I will give some elements on the production of perversions in Western Europe at the end of the 19th century.

Still focusing on bodies, the hypothesis can be made that if some ways, some paths are “*original course*”, some bodies might have more difficulties to pass. In a second step, I will analyse the pervert technic of “passing” and its potentialities.

### **The production of the pervert body :**

To understand pervert bodies we need to make a detour through the scientific production of perversions. I conducted an epistemological research on the scientific production of sexuality through its perversions in Western Europe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century for my PhD dissertation. The production of sexuality I'm referring to is of course not a matter of sexual practices, people had physical contacts before, I'm talking about sexuality as a new field of investment for European scientists. The word sexuality itself appears in the French dictionary only in 1832.

Many scientists have been studying sexuality in the second part of the 19th century. I focused particularly on the work of Doctor Krafft-Ebing. Krafft-Ebing is a forensic doctor, psychiatrist from the beginning of psychiatry, he is one of the first trying to build an homogeneous scientific field around sexuality. Until nowadays he is considered as the father of sexology, his books are regularly republished in several European languages and he is still studied as a pioneer in sexology<sup>1</sup>. Born in Germany, he lived in Vienna

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1 I followed some lectures in sexology at the university Lyon 1 in 2008; Doctor Krafft-Ebing was then presented like one of the main founding father of the discipline.

(Austria) and wrote one main book: *Psychopathia sexualis*, reissued twelve times inbetween 1886 and 1902. During these sixteen years, Krafft-Ebing has been developing his theories on sexuality and collecting many sexual observations. At first, he borrowed some observations from colleagues all over Europe, he made some himself when he was called to the court or treating his patients in a private clinic of Graz (Austria). In the preface of the second edition of *Psychopathia sexualis*, he encouraged perverts to write to him and tell about their lives and perversions. All together, he collected more than 650 letters, testimonies and autobiographies from perverts, which constitute a broad first hand documentation. These amount of observations explains why the *Psychopathia sexualis* got thicker : the first edition was only 110 pages the 12<sup>th</sup> one became 437 pages long. To the passion of the author for his topic we have to stress out also the lucrative part of his work. In between the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> reissues, four years passed (1894-1898). Krafft-Ebing earned 3000 Marks for the 10<sup>th</sup> reissue, when he was mostly earning 100 Marks for his publications. *Psychopathia sexualis*, at least the three last reissues were a well paid project which also shows how much the study of sexuality counted and was a field in which money was invested.

All along the *Psychopathia sexualis*, Krafft-Ebing describes sexuality and its perversions.

*Although his whole work is a call for a civilized sexuality, one in conformity with the "hidden laws of nature" (Psychopathia sexualis, 1895, p. 1), "to propagate a pure race", he is never describing straight how this civilized sexuality should look like. He is encouraging regular intercourses between men and women, but he is taking distances from religious prescriptions, his civilized sexuality cannot be reduced to reproductive sexuality. He never mentions eugenics, never mentions contraceptive methods, intercourses with prostitutes are advised as cure, treatment or become recovery proofs in case of sexual inversion (inverted men of course). The work of Krafft-Ebing doesn't define a norm. The core of his work is to classify, to study in minute details the behaviours, the bodies, the intimate interactions, to build up a field of sexuality cross-ruling the social. Krafft-Ebing relies on four main perversions to which he gives a contain and limits : sexual inversion, which we would nowadays described as a mixture of homosexuality and transidentities, sadism, masochism and fetishism. Doing this, Krafft-Ebing is not only producing perversions, but through the description of perversions he is building up in negative a normative sexuality and giving it its social territories. The body will be one.*

*Bodies are obviously investigated in their more fleshy, intimate and personal dimensions. Measure is the technic used to observe and describe bodies. Measure in its two meanings : to measure and to moderate the body and its passions. In the Psychopathia sexualis, Krafft-Ebing has torn the body apart, distributed a range of values and codes its parts.*

*Let's go into some details about measure first.*

Saying Krafft-Ebing observes, measures the bodies, doesn't mean that he carefully paid attention to the bodies he watched. He did not. Observing is some kind of means to justify his theories, to give them flesh. His gaze is far from naive and surprisingly, for a doctor, his observations are rarely at all linked with pain or discomforts of the perverts. The social body is at stake here, not the individual bodies. Krafft-Ebing did not use a standardized way of observing, like the Bertillonage in France, but if one pay attention to some of his comments like “*no deformity of the hips*”, “*no sign of degeneracy*” it seems he had a frame.

One of the main physiological questions reiterated many times along the *Psychopathia sexualis*, is the problem of locating the perversions in the body, the so called “*seat of perversions*”. Krafft-Ebing oscillated between a small region behind the hypothalamus, in the cerebral cortex and the genitals themselves. (A small aparte to see where the hypothesis of sexuality located in genitals leads : **in the 1920's Germany several medical experiences were made on inverts, an invert locked in a psychiatric hospital got transplanted one extra testicle. The doctors had pretended he should get operated for a hernia, the article says 2 weeks after the operation he affirmed that he was cured, Wiener Blätter, 1927**). “*Seat of perversions*”, skulls (containing the brain) and genitals (contained by the hips) will be the highlights of the observations.

When it comes to skulls, it is clear Krafft-Ebing was in touch with Cesare Lombroso<sup>1</sup>, they both influenced each others works : the vocabulary Krafft-Ebing uses to describe the skulls is the same Lombroso uses. Lombroso participated to the translation of the first edition of *Psychopathia sexualis* in Ital-

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1 Cesare Lombroso (L'homme criminel, 1887 – La femme prostituée, 1889) measured more than 380 skulls to establish links inbetween criminality and the size of the skulls. He has compared the skulls' sizes of killers, thieves, prostitutes... various kind of “criminals”, men and women, Europeans and I quote Lombroso « Antiques, Etrusques, Egyptians, Niggers, Americans, Semites, Paponas, Peruvians », some « prehistoricals », some « savages » and some « moderns »...

ian. In an article of 1891, Krafft-Ebing explains Lombroso, who had read Alfred Binet, *Fetishism in Love* (1887), used the term “fetishism” in Italian to refer to some parts of the *Psychopathia sexualis*. After this exchanges, in the fourth edition of *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1889), fetishism starts to be part of Krafft-Ebing's vocabulary, and even becomes one of the fourth main perversions. For these two authors the size of the skulls is relevant because they correlate it to the size of the brain. The size of the brain is then supposed to be related to the degree of evolution, development, or on the contrary, degeneracy of the studied person.

Genitals are also systematically measured and their symmetry is considered. Assymetry as much as irregularity are considered problematic : the size of the penises, irregular periods of women, the absence of a testicle, a strongly hairy *mons veneris*, a thin vagina, in which intromission would not be possible and so on...

*More generally, big parts of the body are better than smaller, small is a sign of misdevelopment, or one of shrivelling up. Big can also be problematic, big penises or clitorises are signs of sexual excess...*

Skulls, genitals, hips are important parts of the body for the science of sexuality, here we see bridges with racial/racist classifications : broad hips are a sign of animality, of inferiority, of degeneracy of the race. I quote (Gobineau, 1853-55, p. 125) : ***“Camper and other anatomists stated already hip of black people were particular. Doctor Vrolik for instance, stated differences in between female and male hips in Europe were less pronounced as inbetween black men and women. He concludes to a prominent proof of niggers' animality” [my translation].*** For women if their hips are too narrow they constitute a possible sign of inversion, a suspicion of bad mothering abilities... Hips are coded by sexual differences, racial hierarchies, human-animal division.

Furthermore, skin is also at stake, its colour, its texture and the amount of hair covering it, hairy bodies are considered as a sign of lower class, so are dark skins. Hairy bodies for women constitute a proof of inversion, especially facial hair. Hairy bodies are also a proof of animality. Animality could lead to a suspicion of bestiality, degeneracy of the race, lack of hygiene...

We could go on during hours with all the codes applied to the body and linked to perversions in the PS. We will not. But I would still like to precise that the accessories of the bodies are also invested with meaning, if someone likes furs, he/she might be considered atavistic, close to animality... Liking

silk for men is a sign of inversion, this material should only please soft women with sensitive skins... Shoes, handkerchiefs, aprons... to show any kind of interest in these accessories can lead, for men and women, to a suspicion or a proof of sexual perversion.

*These statements are also extended to postures of the body, the way of walking, the way of sitting, of talking, of moving the hands... It also extend to feelings and perceptions in general, liking cats is a proof of inversion for men, as well as being afraid of a storm or jumping after a slamming door.*

With this theorization – observations dynamic, Krafft-Ebing does not contribute to give a picture of the bodies in their diversity, it is obvious that some women have thinner hips than men, for example..., he built up a standardization of a population anchored in the bodies. Krafft-Ebing explains his working project on sexuality as a try to “*preserve and make the race prosper*” (*Psychopathia Sexualis*, 1895, p. 12). *These standards, these norms are then naturalized inside bodies to justify inequalities. Here we reach the second acception of measure, the one of the proper balance.*

*In all these measures, the proper measure, the one that doesn't imply a suspicion or a proof of perversion, is left to the appreciation of the scientists. It will be the task of forensic medicine to divide the perverts from the perverted, to part them between jails and psychiatric institutions, taking into account their social status, the position they take towards their perversions, if they feel ashamed, if they justify themselves and so on...*

*I told you before many perverts wrote to Krafft-Ebing, they use the same vocabulary he uses. They examine themselves like Krafft-Ebing would have done it if he could have observed their bodies. The medical discourses is socially put in circulation by the perverts themselves.*

*Further more, the science of sexuality did not stay confined in some medical offices, in confidential scientific publications. By the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, many books were popularizing these theories and spread all over Europe.*

*The pervert body was born and like Foucault explained it (Les anormaux, 1999), a pervert differs strongly from a monster. A monster is studied and considered in itself, behind a pervert is standing a normative grid which is not only applying to the perverts, but to the society as a whole. **Scientifically, socially and politically sexual perversions were not only relevant for, and applied on sexual minorities, but broadly coded anyone's body and its limits, that is to say its proximities, distances and possible interactions.***

*Some sexual minorities politics play with this power of the pervert and its capacities of resignification of the body, of the sexuality. I quote here an excerpt of the Lesbian Body from Monique Wittig 1973, I quote in French and will then give an English translation :*

« J// découvert sur tes bras sur tes épaules sur le haut de ton dos sur tes reins sur ton thorax les marques violettes tout en ordre sur la peau de ton corps. » (Wittig, *Le corps lesbien*, 1973, p. 105).

[“I discover on your arms on your shoulders on the top of your back on your kidneys on your thorax purple/lavender traces ordered on the skin of your body” [my translation, but the text, the lesbian body, exist in English too]].

*A naive reading of this sentence could wonder what kind of “purple/lavender traces” the lesbians are worried about : does she talk about varicose veins, stretch marks, bruises... ?*

*I don't know what is the origin of this but lavender/purple/violet is a symbolic colour for lesbians: Lavender Menace, is a political group in the US 1970's, many lesbian newspaper titles refer to this : Lavender Sheets, Lavender Times, Lavender Visions, Purple Rage, Purple Stars (North America), Violet Pulse (Poland), Lila Schriften (Austria)... in France, Violette and co is the name of a lesbian library in Paris. Considering the production of the pervert body by the science of sexuality, considering lavender/purple/violet as a symbolic colour for lesbians, the sentence of Monique Wittig gets another kind of impact.*

*This first part gave some insights of what I refer to with the expression “pervert body”, in this second part I will go on with the “passing” as a contemporary technic of resistance.*

*Passing as a pervert technic of resistance :*

As a preamble, and to understand the *passing*, one should reconsider the concepts gender and sex. If there are two sexes, there cannot be two genders. Here a common split supposes sexes describe biological truth and gender refers to socialization of sexes. This split is problematic considering that biology has its own sociology and is not describing the real, but producing effects of reality (Haraway, 2009). The division in two sexes could maybe be accepted, even though a large feminist critic has shown its problems (Ivekovic, 2003) and even though it is also broadly contested by intersex people (<http://www.isna.org/>), who are bound not

to exist or to spend their childhood and puberty at the hospital under hormonal treatments. So if we temporarily still keep this two sexes division, genders have to be considered in their complexities and for this reason, there can't be only two genders repeating what the concept of sex already describes. Genders are many. It is exactly because there are many genders and only two sexes understandable that we can talk about *passing*. *Passing is a technic of pervert bodies to try to move within an hegemony.*

*The concept of passing which stem from the verb to pass is strategically used by some sexual minorities, some pervert bodies to describe the possibilities of being "recognized" (seen, heard, felt...) in and within the codes of hegemony. It is a matter of social movements, a position that has been forced, a location that has been chosen and/or differs from the one in which the person has been brought up. Passing means allowing oneself more or less movements according to what one thinks/feels the others think, might think or how they could react. To pass as concept includes three meanings the English verb to pass can have: to move in a specified direction, to go past or across, to go beyond the limits and to succeed.*

*Passing is interesting as such, not so much to understand the individual personal strategies to feel good, it is not the place here to talk about it, this is more a communitarian preoccupation, passing is interesting to underline and understand the normative investment in bodies as a technic of population control. The technic of passing stretches out that some bodies are produced perverts, are made others in the modernity ( this othering is based on race, sex, sexuality, some disabilities, especially the sensitive ones...).*

*Passing supposes a grid everyone knows, learn and relearn : what passes and what doesn't pass. One can pass as a women, one day, or somewhere, become transgender the next day, or everywhere else, nothing has changed, just the passing. This grid is a mean to make oneself readable for his/her surrounding and within the public space.*

*Even though it is evident I repeat here that passing doesn't preexist to socialization. If some bodies are supposed normal, regular, it is because they have the power of the hegemony which naturalized and normalized them.*

*In 2009-10, I conducted interviews with women, lesbians, and trans people. I asked them to describe themselves physically and to describe how they think they are read/decoded while they move in public spaces. I had left on the side these interviews since I was in the last years busy with my archive work and its epis-*

*temological perspective. I got surprised when I listened to these interviews again recently preparing this paper and I found out the description the interviewees made from their pervert bodies made the standards of the Psychopathia sexualis resonate again.*

*Since the political struggles of the 60's visibility as a technic and pride as a posture were emphasized among sexual minorities. Passing does not have to be opposed to visibility even though it could at first seem to be, since passing is a try to fit into the transparency of the neutral, a try not to focus on one's particularism. Visibility in its beginning let's say in France late 60's early 70's with groups as les gouines rouges (red dykes), some parts of the feminist movement (MLF), the homosexual movements like the FHAR Homosexual revolutionary action front, Les pétroleuses... chose the visibility not to show up as such, but as a disturbing stone in a well oiled system, we could call it the heterosexist hegemony. With the politics of rights and the identity politics choices within the sexual minorities in Western countries in the end of the 1990's and beginning of the 21st century, the context is not the same anymore and visibility as technic should be questioned.*

*Some might have heard about it abroad, in France last year the government gave the right of marriage and adoption to gay and lesbians. To almost all gay and lesbians, since eleven nationalities are excluded from this right. French gay and lesbians can't get married with gay and lesbians from : Poland, Bosnia, Montenegro, Serbia, Kosovo, Slovenia, Marocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Cambodge and Laos. This choice of the government could have made the pervert bodies and sexual minorities claims visible. It is actually the contrary that happened. The visible discourses were against the marriage : the conservative right, different racist and nationalist extreme rights, some religious movements predominantly catholic ones, masculinists (who are men affirming they don't have anymore power in a society supposedly dominated by women, their struggle is based on the right of custody of their children) and a new social group which would be a mixture of the aforementioned groups, gathered around a struggle against what they call "gendeur theory" (with the French accent). All this people got a tribune to talk about their project of society and reinforce the sexual norms and sex roles especially concerning what should be said on these topics to children. Concretely, NGO like SOS homophobie, report as an assesement of this first year of marriage in France. An increasing amount of physical aggressions towards sexual minorities (one each two*



*days) and a never attended level of discriminating discourses in political institutions, media, public spaces...<sup>1</sup>*

*On the other side, these new rights and the identity politics of the last decade saw new hierarchies emerging among sexual minorities (while some are demanding for rights, some get pushed further in the margins).*

*On a geopolitical level, globally as much as locally, homosexuality started to be reused, like at the end of the 19th century with the science of sexuality, as a proof of development, as means to push away some in a barbarian past. This is especially aiming the Muslim minorities in France, in Holland, in the US (Puar, 2007).*

*Within all these complexities, visibility can't continue to be used as a innocent strategy. Passing can be understood as a counter technic, passing is a resistance of everyday for oneself within a coercitive hegemony. It implies to know the possible and impossible ways to get some air, to take up more space, to develop some more movements. Passing make new alliances possible within complex individual and collective subjectivation processes, always depending on their hegemonic or communitarian surroundings. Passing is a concept but it is also a passport, passing allows one to circulate in a society, when this one doesn't pass, this one is exposed to power abuses (than can range from unpleasant mean gazes, rapes, bashing to life danger) : I quote Sara Ahmed, « Passing functions here as a technology, which relates physical movement with identity formation: to pass through a space requires passing as a particular kind of subject, one whose difference is unmarked and unremarkable »<sup>2</sup>.*

*Passing is a sexual minorities technic of resistance but it was also a technic of resistance to racism in the US context during the segregation of the first part of the 20th century. Nella Larsen wrote a novel with this title, the aims seem to be alike, I quote (p. 16. Nella Larsen, *Passing*, 1929): “It wasn't that she was ashamed of being Negro, or even having it declared. It was the idea of being ejected from any place, even in the polite and tactful way in which the Drayton [a white family for who she passes as white] would probably do it, that disturbed her.”. It would be interesting to see bridges and doors (Simmel, 1902) in between these different uses of the same technic especially concerning people of color belonging to sexual minorities. On this, I refer to the book of Gloria E. Anzaldúa,*

1 [http://www.sos-homophobic.org/sites/default/files/rapport\\_annuel\\_2014.pdf](http://www.sos-homophobic.org/sites/default/files/rapport_annuel_2014.pdf)

2 Sara Ahmed, *Affective Economies*, Social Text, volume 22, n° 2, été 2004, p. 122.

*Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987).

In conclusion, I will open some questions starting with repeating the title of this intervention : *Which space for pervert bodies ?*

This question doesn't intend to focus on the pervert body itself, which sounds too abstract and universal. It is a try to map the production of the pervert body. Mapping is a technic of appropriation (McClintock, 2000), that could in this case be used to grasp the social territories in which pervert bodies were produced and set in. Map could also be a means to understand *passing* not only like bodies in their movements, but also the territories they need and occupy, the spaces they allow to themselves as well as the gaps and permeabilities pictured between themselves (ourselves) and the others.

Which position we choose in the localisation we are given ? Which crossings ? Which gaps ? How do we move? How a body is building itself up ? How a body is legitimate to describe and eventually to change the setting ? Which bodies are setting the tone ?

If we can talk about sexual orientation, how we orientate ourselves ? Where are we located by others ? Which social territories are invested ?

In the call for paper of this summer university a link was proposed between homosexual claims and pleasures, uses of pleasures, from the famous Foucault's text (1984), I would like to complete this reference to another one: "*Pleasures open bodies to worlds through an opening up of the body to others. As such, pleasures can allow bodies to take up more space.*" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 165)

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## Performing Bare Feminism: A Taiwanese Contextualization of the Femen's Body

ELSA DANIELS  
JULIEN QUELENNEC

« In the beginning, there was the body, feeling of the woman's body, feeling of joy because it is so light and free. Then there was injustice, so sharp that you feel it with your body, it immobilizes the body, hinders its movements, and then you find yourself your body's hostage. And so you turn your body against this injustice, mobilizing every body's cell to struggle against the patriarchy and humiliation. You tell the world: Our God is a Woman!

Our Mission is Protest!

Our Weapon are bare breasts!

And so FEMEN is born and sextremism is set off. » (femen.org)

The statement is clear: the body is the core of Femen's activism. Their movement is a reaction against all forms of alienation of the woman's body. It was originally free, but now it is enchained. This parody of genesis sets the tone of Femen's activism: it is provocative and subversive, with a touch of humor. Anna Hutsol, one of the founders of Femen, declared in 2009 how the Femen had developed a "unique way of civil self-expression based on creativity, courage, humor, efficiency and shock."<sup>1</sup> However, if this is indeed

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1 <http://observers.france24.com/content/20090828-how-they-protest-prostitution-ukraine-femen-sex-tourism>

a good description of the undertaken actions of the Femen, one cannot but feel ill-at-ease while reading the texts which are supposed to provide a more elaborated view of their political stance. Identifying the sex-industry as “the most large-scale and long-term genocide against women” (femen.org) for example, certainly cannot be seen as part of a humoristic strategy anymore. We can read in such formulation the expression of a certain truth claim (the genocide belongs to the regime of international law and supposes a form of universalism) that goes far beyond the mode of actions Femen have chosen in order to face the socio-political injustice imposed on women. With such claims, the rebellious body in action becomes representative of a certain representation of the woman’s body as bearer of a universal truth: the oppressive nature of the patriarchal order. Most critiques of the Femen have focused on the use of the topless body for feminist actions, but few have paid serious attention to the role of the text inscribed on the body of the protester. What could be a discursive analysis of the Femen’s movement? Is there anything interpretable in the words “Fuck Putin!” or “Fuck the Church!”? It seems to us that this is where the Femen’s political use of the body must be problematized. On the one hand, their actions manifest the desire to break away from a dominant representation of the woman’s social role. The breast becomes a weapon and is not identified anymore as a source of pleasure or as a source of nourishment (Yalom, 105). The performative nature of their action is effective in activating a strategy of subjective agency in search of control of its own body. Is this what they mean when they say that their body is politicized through their topless protests? The body is not objectified, because it speaks back and does not subject itself to the desire of the observer. On the other hand, the body of the woman is somehow idealized (“Our God is a woman”) and becomes the bearer of a truth, the revolutionary truth of the free women, even if it is vulgar and obscene. To use their own words: “Body-poster is the truth delivered by the body by means of nudity and meanings inscribed on it” (femen.org). The passage from a politicization of the body in action to the inscription of truth on the body of the protester is important because it indicates the point where the body cannot fully speak for itself and needs to be re-articulated in a language which can speak for and about it. Our concern is that this articulation of the body to language, its translation, seems to be largely ignored by the Femen who engage in their actions with a sense of self-certainty associated to the nude truth (or the self-evident truth of the nude). To what extent then is the initial politicization

of the body operated by the Femen not limited by their participation in a discursive universalization of the woman as a category? In that perspective, we would like to question the Femen's current tendency to re-appropriate, as "Femen-like," any protest which would make use of the topless body as a form of political expression.

We will first try to provide a contextual understanding of the formation of the Femen in Ukraine. Our goal is not to make the detailed history of this group, but to have a glimpse at the geo-historical conditions of its transnationalization. It is important, because we think that the universalist claims of the Femen should be placed in a post-cold war context in order to evaluate the possible imperialist tendencies underlying their movement. Then, we will come back to overview Femen's actions, and try to shed light on some of the limits of the standardization of the politicization of the body. We wonder if the inclination to perform body politics as a way to attract public attention is not also what keeps Femen's discourse at a level of abstraction where they lose sight of the contextual conditions of the protest. In these both parts, we will refer to the Taiwanese context in order to put into perspective the problem posed by the supposed universalism of the Femen's body politics.

With the establishment of global communities such as the European Union and the United Nations, integration demands the adoption of modern nation-state policies as defined by these communities. As marginalized non-members, Taiwan and Ukraine share some similarities in the ways they deal with their positions outside international groups. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the lift of martial law in Taiwan in 1987 promised new freedoms for Ukrainian and Taiwanese citizens. However in the states' attempts to become part of global communities, both countries have formed coalitions with locally based, "Western" influenced NGOs to rapidly harmonize with 'non-negotiable standards and obligations.'

Taiwan, as criticized by Taiwanese scholar and activist, Josephine Ho, benefited greatly from locally based Christian NGOs that had achieved some international recognition, such as the Catholic Good Shepherd Sisters, Garden of Hope, Rainbow Project Center and End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism. As these groups participated in international conferences, not only did they create networks where information could be shared and credibility

gained, but also provide Taiwanese officials with the opportunity to participate and increase Taiwan's international visibility<sup>1</sup>. Further down its path towards inclusion, Taiwan's continued compliance with the standards set by the UN led to an important change regarding child protection laws in 2003<sup>2</sup>. . What this created was an increased censorship scheme led by the conservative Christian groups in order to further cleanse Taiwan of 'inappropriate' sexual material. This new law ensured that minors could no longer access any kind of sexually explicit material, including mangas and the internet. As a result, gay and lesbian teens were also deprived of information hubs that had previously been used to learn more about their sexuality (Ho, *Queer* 542-3). Under the banner of child protection, Christian NGOs in coalition with the media, marginalized sexuality by posing it as a threat to innocent children. These groups now specializing in child protection programs were able to maneuver state laws regarding sexual acts and information on deviant sexualities through their achieved international recognition, which now somehow had branded them as the spokesperson for international standards.

At the par with children protection, human trafficking also became a key element in Taiwan's harmonization process. During the 1980s, another Christian group (Presbyterian Church of Taiwan) decided to take up the cause as they became aware of aboriginal girls being sold into prostitution (Ho, *Anti-Trafficking* 84). Projects were developed, and marches were staged. However, their initial focus, anti-trafficking of child prostitutes, shifted towards fighting the gendered oppression of girls by "immoral men" and somehow finally evolved into the "total abolition of sex work" (Ho, *Anti-Trafficking* 88-9). In the 1990s, "embarrassed to find itself listed among economically and politically 'backward' countries...Taiwan government scrambled to improve its image and international reputation, thus creating a new window of opportunity for the legislative efforts launched by anti-child-prostitution groups" (Ho, *Anti-Trafficking* 88). Taiwanese NGOs took advantage of Taiwan's shame in order to continue their rampant enterprise to further marginalize sexuality in the name of child protection. What ensued was yet another transformation of laws. Heavy penalizations would befall

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1 As was the case of the official who participated in the ECPAT World Congress in Yokohama in 2001 (Ho, *Queer* 548-9)

2 The reform of two Welfare Acts, previously differentiating between minors below 12 and those between 12 and 18, now stipulated that all those under 18 years of age would be considered minors (cf. Ho, *Queer* 542)

all those involved and those related to those involved with “any kind of obscene contact,” regardless of whether it had been done at home or abroad (Ho, *Anti-Trafficking* 89, 93, 97). Paradoxically, despite these hyperbolic actions to thwart human trafficking, the trafficking of migrant labor from Southeast Asian countries “is being conducted on a much larger scale than ever imagined” (Ho, *Anti-Trafficking* 97). Thus showing that Taiwanese overly exclusive anti-human trafficking laws fail to consider other kinds of human trafficking that go unnoticed by local Christian NGOs. The NGOs limited focus towards the complete abolition of all matters categorized as ‘obscene’ has taken the fore, and has thus marginalized sexualities, erased ‘saved’ subjects agencies and negated the emergence of other subjectivities.

Under similar circumstances with Taiwan, Ukraine has also battled its non-inclusion to the EU through the use of NGOs. During the late 1990s, right wing Ukrainian politicians pushed for anti-human trafficking and anti-domestic violence laws, in compliance with the “international pressure...to address its worsening human rights record” (Hrycak, *Orange* 163). Laws were eventually passed in 1999 and 2001 respectively. However, the state did very little to implement them, and the promise of support crisis centers and shelters were left in the hands of Western groups and municipal authorities which had already been managing them long before the law was passed (Hrycak, *Orange* 164). It wasn’t until after the Orange Revolution and the election of “Western-leaning” President Yushchenko that shelters, help hotlines and a variety of services to help victims of domestic violence were increased (Hrycak, *Orange* 164). Cooperation between women’s groups and the state further strengthened as the state sought the advice of these “on how to further harmonize Ukrainian and EU policies” regarding gender equality (Hrycak, *Orange* 164). Like Taiwan, Ukraine dealt mostly with “Western-influenced” groups in their discussion regarding these issues, since the set of issues grassroots groups focused on did not attract the attention of foreign investors and were not at par with the EU’s interests<sup>1</sup>.

Similarly to the Taiwanese interest regarding human trafficking, Ukraine also became interested by this issue. However before we move on to this, it is important to first take a look at some of the consequences the introduction of

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1 For more information on Ukrainian grassroots groups, see Hrycak in “Foundation Feminism and the Articulation of Hybrid Feminisms in Post-Socialist Ukraine.”



the Western market economy into Ukraine has had on gendered roles and the family structure. First of all, “the coming of market capitalism to postsocialist Ukraine has meant the expulsion of women from the workforce and...now a career housewife by default” (Zhurzhenko, quoted in Solari 24). What this meant was a successful redefinition of the roles each member played in the family. The family deviated away from the traditional Ukrainian extended structure towards a modern European nuclear structure. Grandparents who used to take care of their grandchildren are now left with nothing to do, since the recently ousted working mother has become the housewife, and the father, who used to share the economic burden with his wife, is now considered the sole breadwinner of the family (Solari 24). In many cases, because the salary of only one member is not enough to support a whole family, many women, especially grandmothers, go abroad to find work and eventually become “undocumented domestic workers” (Solari 29, Hrycak, *Women* 49). “This migration in turn supports the Ukrainian nation-building project, and becoming ‘Europe’ (a move toward the capitalist market and prosperity) rather than ‘Africa’ (no market and poverty)” (Solari 29). In other words, because the nuclear family structure is impossible under the living conditions in Ukraine, these migrant grandmothers in sending their salaries back home reinforce the implementation of the nuclear family, and the extinction of the traditional Soviet extended family. Furthermore, because of the increased Western attention placed on sex trafficking, and its mission to eradicate it, it was made very difficult for young Ukrainians to obtain tourist visas for Western countries. And because Western representations of trafficked victims mostly depicted women as sex-trafficked prostitutes, migrant women workers were stigmatized under this light (Hrycak, *Women* 49). Of course, these hyperbolic reports did not take into account that a large percentage of migrant women were actually working as domestic workers in European countries, such as Italy<sup>1</sup>.

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1 In her article Solari talks about the mixed emotions women migrant workers have as they return to their “European Ukraine.” As their actions contribute to the development of “European Ukraine,” the real state of affairs reveals that Ukraine has a long way to go in its development, and that at the moment it may look more like Africa, “the forgotten underbelly of globalization” (28). These migrant women not only have been stigmatized by the implementation of anti-trafficking laws and the misrepresentation of migrant labor as prostitutes on account of Ukraine’s harmonization process, but have also been put in a position which supports this system that marginalizes them.

Unlike Taiwan, where conservative Christian groups have established a strong voice regarding women's issues, Ukrainian women's NGOs either lack financial support or public interest. The pressure from abroad to focus on a pre-given women's rights agenda affects groups seeking foreign investors. It leaves them unsupported by local women, and although coalitions with more popular maternalist grassroots groups would benefit both sides greatly, they are not established (Zychowicz, Kim). By looking at how the state has dealt with women issues in Ukraine, and how its path towards harmonization has led to the marginalization of women workers, the implementation of the traditional woman's role as housewife, the lack of female participation in the state, the state's limited cooperation with women's NGOs and the unchallenged gender inequality, we can see how a new style of activism could emerge from these circumstances. In 2008, Femen, a protest group which meant to point out the lack of attention women's issues receive in Ukraine, sought to uncover the actual role women play in society and raise awareness on the multiple problems within Ukraine through their protests. Their actions were witty, provocative and clear. However they later employed forms of organization and focus endemic to international NGOs, such as global women's rights and anti-prostitution, while at the same time distancing themselves from other feminists and NGOs in order to prove their inefficiencies in dealing with gender equality. If they are able to directly show the ever looming presence of the 'patriarchy' through their protests, then their actions are justified and dialogue is pointless, since other groups have not achieved complete equality and there is still work to be done.

During their first years of organization (2008-2010), Femen, recognized as "bizarre street theatre" (Rubchak 17), tackled a wide range of issues: political prostitution and populism during the 2010 election campaigns, sexual harassment in universities, lack of female politicians and freedom of the press in 2010, public stress over the H1N1 flu epidemic in 2009, among many more (flicker.com). They have shown creativity when staging their diverse performances, such as mimicking police beating the press, fabricating underwear from hygienic face masks, or female university students getting 'spanked' by professors. Initially they had plans to become the first all female political party in Ukraine. However those plans were discarded when some of the leading members had to leave the country and seek refuge in Paris (femen.org). Femen now is but a shadow of what it used to be. Not only

have they become a transnational group with branches in several countries in Europe and America, their protests have been reduced more and more to the simplistic, yet seemingly provocative act of exposing their breasts in opposition to patriarchal representations, namely prostitution, dictatorship and religion (femen.org). Their demand to have political and religious ‘dictators’ assume individual responsibilities for the multiple oppressive actions taken on women calls for individualized short-term solutions that do not question the system which has created them.

Femen’s passive aggressive tactics reinforce Jasbir Puar’s rewording of Derek Gregory’s analysis of “imagined geographies”: “certain desired truths become lived truths, as if they were truths, thus producing material traces and evidences of these truths, despite what counter-evidence may exist” (39). In other words, by staging passive aggressive street performances Femen not only reinforces its claims of the oppressed and victimized role of women in society, but also proves how its “desired truths” are lived and exposed in male police officers, priests and bystanders’ conducts. As they run around bellowing their protest chants and wriggling away from the clutches of the police and bystanders, they make sure that cameras are on site and whatever happens is recorded in some kind of way. In this manner Femen activists overlook the visual and verbal provocation they use, namely their nakedness and use of ‘obscene’ language, to excite these figures. In the end “they produce the effect that they name and describe” (Puar 39). This interpretation of ‘imagined geographies’ accurately illustrates the Femen’s claims on the oppressive nature of the patriarchy on all women. Nevertheless Femen has learned firsthand that one of the most effective ways to become influential is by being internationally recognized, as Ukraine has shown in its harmonization process with the EU. Refusing to engage in dialogue with politicians, legislative bodies and other women activists, Femen focuses more on influencing women directly through their actions<sup>1</sup>. It cannot however be simply identified to a new form of “consciousness raising”.

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1 In contrast to the Femen’s global politics, next door neighbor Russian punk rock band Pussy Riot recognizes that discourse cannot be taken from place to place without first being molded into the context of that new place. Therefore groups who employ this kind of method become unimportant and unrecognizable to people of that place (Pussy Riot Interview). Because of their lack of dialogue with other women and feminist groups, Femen has been extensively criticized for their limited views on global feminism and global women’s rights.

It is to our understanding that Femen, as a now branded transnational organization, mimics tactics used by existing global communities. Through their discourse of “Sextremism,” they have established what freedom embodies (secular unoppressed nakedness), they have exported their policies to other countries without first establishing a space for dialogue and contextual adjustment, and they have marginalized groups that do not comply with their policies, thus stripping them of agency and reducing them to victims in the need of rescuing (Christian and particularly Islamic women)<sup>1</sup>. On that account, Femen’s messages can easily be misinterpreted or misunderstood, and seen as neocolonial, Islamophobic, and indifferent to other countries’ histories and feminist tendencies. Though it can be said that Femen has given some space for their branches to decide which local issues to tackle, they will still revolve around the three key issues that have been established already by its headquarters in Paris. Their drive towards exposing the dilemmas of apparent gender equality reflects the lack of attention gender related topics have received in Ukraine and the form international NGOs have adopted to influence local NGOs. Therefore their affirmation of momentarily provoked outbursts of ‘patriarchal’ sentiments serve as evidence that fuels their “imagined geographies,” with which they can justify that Ukraine is not the only country where gender inequality exists.

Can we consider then that harmonization processes, as those witnessed in Taiwan and Ukraine, can be reflected on the types of internationally visible women’s activist groups that arise in that country? In Taiwan there is the emergence of Western-recognized conservative child-protecting Christian groups and in Ukraine, topless secular transnational feminists. Is it also possible to consider whether criticism of global communities can be made through the discourses of such said women activists, since they reproduce by-products of global communities?

Because of the existence of multiple economic and political differences between Taiwan and Ukraine, this comparison of course has its limitations. And though it is strange to draw a parallel between Taiwanese Christian

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1 About Femen’s position regarding Islam, the chapter “Naked rather than in Niqab” in *Femen by Femen* sets the tone: they denounce the “barbarians” in Turkey, the “savagery” (to cover girls at 6 years old) in Afghanistan, or proclaim in Paris “Islamist=sadist”. There is a clear affirmation of the necessity to free the Muslim women (“Get undressed” and you’ll be free...).

NGOs and the secular anti-women's oppression Femen, we can say that these groups' origins both lay in marginalized countries. While Ukraine, located at the border of Europe, is marginalized economically from the benefits shared by members of the EU, Taiwan faces political marginalization from the UN and remains unacknowledged by most countries. In comparison to Taiwan, because Ukraine is already a member of the UN, it can be said that the influence NGOs would have on the nation-building process would remain limited. And while international pressure can still influence Ukraine's policies on human trafficking violations and gender inequality, its already implemented laws legally justify the state's responsibility regarding these issues. Even though they are not being enforced.

Furthermore, if we were to take into consideration the export and import of migrant labor, we will see that a rather complicated set of issues is at work in Ukraine and Taiwan. The Ukrainian exportation of labor not only positions the state in the context of the "African," third-world imaginary, but also renders these actions necessary for its own EU harmonization. These methods not only benefit Ukraine, but also the laborers' host country as well. On the other hand, Taiwan embodies the "European" imaginary, similarly to Italy, by importing migrant labor that not only encompasses the caretaking of its growing elderly population, but also the necessary cheap labor needed in manufacturing. The differences portrayed by the direction of labor migration, both indicate the economic and political situations of both countries. As an extension to Josephine Ho's argument on global governance and the above comparison between Taiwan and Ukraine, there is a higher probability for internationally sanctioned conservative groups to maneuver the nation-state building process of politically marginalized countries seeking inclusion into global communities. While simplistic protest groups like the Femen are more viably applied in countries that have already established their presence as global players. With that said we believe that, because Taiwanese conservative groups have made their mark and have strongly rooted themselves in Taiwanese politics, it would be hard for the Femen to be introduced into this sphere.

We first wanted to locate the politicized body of the Femen in the post-cold war mapping of the world because it indicates the conditions of their strategy of globalization. We believe that the Femen's use of the body is a

product of these global conditions, and that it is first meant to counter-act their negative effects on women's lives. To what extent can the Femen's political use of the topless body effectively alter these conditions, or the way we perceive them? This is what we will deal with in this second part.

The topless or nude body has been used as a political instrument of expression in different places and for diverse purposes. Femen's topless protest is sometimes associated to the "slut walks" or to the "bra burning" movement of the 60's. But this last reference is sometimes used only to criticize their action, to say that "this has already been done." Actually it has been done all throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1929 Nigerian women protested topless to denounce the rule of a colonial administration that had authorized the exploitation of their land. More recently, in 2004 in Northeast India, a group of women staged a naked protest after the torture, rape and murder of a young woman, Thangjam Manorama, while she was in custody in an Indian's Army Battalion. In 2011, topless South-Korean sex workers took to the streets and faced the police crackdown on brothels. The topless tactic has also been used by the group Peta in the last ten years, to defend animal rights and vegetarianism. We could also mention the example of the American group of the nude activists (equal topless rights for all) that protested in 2012 for the equal rights to be topless in public.

These actions are unrelated to each other and to the Femen. The only link is the tactical use of the topless body. We don't know if the Femen is inspired by these examples. We can only speculate that they would probably express solidarity to some of these movements. We don't intend to provide an exhaustive list of topless protests, or to make a comparison between these diverse protests and analyze their relations. We would just like to note that the topless body has been used in political demonstrations all over the globe and for a long period of time. However, the number of examples may have increased in the last couple of years. Is the Femen partly responsible for this development? New groups have also emerged to counter Femen's ideas by mimicking their tactics. This is the case of "Putin's Army" in Russia, a group of beautiful young women who will "tear it up for Putin." We could also take the example of the "Homen" in France who protest topless in opposition to same sex marriage. However, we believe that what is important regarding Femen's impact is not so much the increasing quantity of topless actions, but their increasing visibility. What we would like to question is the Femen's growing referentiality regarding all topless actions. This tendency to impose

itself as a kind of hegemonic referentiality certainly follows from their success. But we want to understand the possible problems posed by such appropriation of the protesting topless body by the Femen.

When we looked at the situation in Taiwan, we encountered three protests in which the naked or topless body was concerned. In 2006, twenty years after the Chernobyl incident, a group of twenty people launched a naked protest against the construction of a fourth power plant on the island. In 2011, the action was reiterated. The nude form was part of a game with words: “better nude than nuke” (in Chinese : ninglebuhe). These actions are part of a more general social movement against the development of nuclear energy in Taiwan. It is unrelated to a feminist claim, or to the Femen’s movement. Femen also protested in 2011 at the limit of Chernobyl’s exclusion zone in order to pay homage to the people who died following the incident of 1986. But in this case, it is not articulated to a localized social movement. Another example of naked protest in Taiwan occurred after the gay pride parade, when a group called “Oh my gay” made a clear statement to address the problems encountered by the gay community because of the anti-obscenity laws mentioned earlier in this article. This example differs radically from the Femen’s practice, because it was addressed mostly to the gay movement itself, and it was staged in such a way that nudity was meant to make people listen to the clear and detailed statement this group had prepared. The purpose was to remind the gay community of Taiwan that the main issue to be addressed was maybe not so much same sex marriage or the right to hold a gay pride parade. We can see that the naked body has a different function in the Taiwanese instances. Another example took place recently during the student protest against the extension of the commercial agreement between Taiwan and China; a group of four women staged a topless action within the demonstration. On their bodies were written the characters wobufu, “I don’t serve”, to criticize what they identify as the sale of the Taiwanese nation to the Chinese State. Here, we can interpret the use of the topless body as a return to the familiar association of the body of the woman with the nation<sup>1</sup>. Our point here is not to define a Taiwanese use of the nude or topless body in

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1 Though we didn’t have the possibility to communicate with the students who organized this action, it seems to us that, even though they shared some common features with the Femen’s mode of operation, their action remains grounded in a nationalist agenda which differs from Femen’s transnational perspective.

protest, but rather to show that this mode of political expression is based on a local context and to specific circumstances. They are part of more general social movements within Taiwan, and they don't proceed to institutionalize "toplessness" in protests. By contrast, we can see that Femen's use of the body is meant to spread itself in a more uniform way to deal with a wide range of issues. In short, it consists in a kind of standardization of the body of the protester which makes some people question Femen's obsession with the woman's breast, when other parts of the body can also be used. We previously suggested that the lack of interest for Femen's action in Taiwan could be related to the power that the NGOs acquired in the context of the formation of the Nation-State. Now, the examples we took from the Taiwanese context lead us to think that it can also be understood from the perspective of the abstraction from contextual determinations which characterizes Femen's performances. What is at stake is the limit of Femen's performative strategy.

The use of the topless body in protests is not new, but the specificity of Femen regarding the topless action is that it has become their signature. The topless action became part of a marketing strategy through which the group could secure their international recognition. The topless body became a "label." However, we should still maintain a difference between the strategy of development of the organization and the tactical use of the topless body in the action itself. In the moment of the protest, the topless body is first used to produce a disturbance in the common perception of the genderized differentiation between public and private space. What is supposed to be part of the privacy of the woman, her breast, is exposed to the public attention. It challenges the representations of the respectable mode of participation of the woman in the public sphere. The sexualization of the protest is meant to attract the public gaze, but also to stage the mechanism of domination of the woman's body by the male's gaze (and the woman's possible complicity in such mechanism). In the theatrical performances of the Femen, there is indeed a will to operate a form of distancing between the observer and their representation of the normal social order. They want to disrupt the peace of the passive civil spectator. They are calling for a reaction, and it is this which will at the end justify their mode of action. They want to irritate people because, according to them, then the "masks fall" and people would express their true positions regarding equality and social justice between genders. If they are arrested, it "shows" the level of democracy and of freedom of speech of a country. It seems to us that the initial burlesque and parodic nature of



the performance is somehow put into question by such desire to reveal the truth of a socio-political situation. What was first a performative game with our representations and the illusions which constitute them (playing with the fake and social appearances), claims itself as the incarnation of a truth that calls up the martyr figure<sup>1</sup>. Our point is not to say that Femen actually contributes in the reproduction of a patriarchal order, but to understand when the reasons behind Femen's actions get lost, and why it makes some people think that they blindly follow an imperialist agenda. It is in that perspective that we can also situate the critiques of the Femen considering that they are more interested by media coverage than by the actual uplifting of the social status of women.

In fact, the problem lies not so much in this desire for public attention. It is indeed normal for a protest to be willing to attract a maximum of publicity. It would be somehow paradoxical to criticize Femen's efficiency on that level. It only gets confusing when we consider the wide range of issues they are dealing with. Questions about what is going on behind the stage are raised, and by way of consequence, the actual issues that the performances are supposed to disclose are put on the side. This could be interpreted in relation to the problematic participation of the Femen in the mediatic flow. But we would rather like to consider it as a consequence of the emphasis the Femen places on the theatricality of the protest. In other words, we interpret it as an outcome of the choice for a performative mode of action at the expense of a reflexion on the contextualization of the issue at stake. The Femen demonstrate their creativity and originality in the staging of their protest, that is to say in their theatrical mode of intervention. They put a lot of thought and energy in the costumes they wear (nurses, nuns, maids, etc...) and in their choreography (anti-fascist demonstrations before the last European elections) as much as in the coordination of the good moment and good place to strike (facing the political representatives in G8, interventions during the "Eropolis" show). This is the reason why they could appear to bystanders more as stage performers than protesters. The topless body is the central element of the action. In the act of performing, it becomes the universal referent for the (de-)contextualization of the protest. It is more than a simple signature of the Femen's group. It presents itself as a possible answer

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1 Inna Shevchenko writes in *Femen by Femen* : " I might end up my days somewhere in Iraq or Iran, butchered by a fanatic mob." (*Femen by Femen*, 162)

to diverse issues, and as a relevant political stance in all kinds of situations. It is as if the topless body, the breast as “weapon,” could be transposed to any place and appear at any time to disclose an identical and global meaning: the liberation of the woman. This makes sense if you consider the topless body within the economy of Femen’s narrative. But it also limits the contextual understanding of the protest to the moment of performance itself. Therefore, the local social context of the problem tends to be excluded from the Femen’s picture. In short, the topless body is a source of strength for the activist but also a form of self-enclosure of this same activist within the limits of her action.

Our goal is not to criticize Femen’s actions as such, but to hint at the problem posed by what tends to be action for the sake of action. We have been struck by the fact that the Femen have a tendency to contrast their sextremism with a supposed “classical feminism” defined as a more theoretical approach on women’s issues. This opposition between practice and theory can be understood as a reaction to the so-called real feminist critics of Femen’s activism. Femen’s self-definition as the warriors of feminism is a way to answer these critiques. It indicates what their specific function is. The classical form of feminism acts in conference halls and in boring books and articles, and so is considered as obsolete and inefficient for the Femen, because it cannot get out of the academic world. This positioning of Femen’s role against a conventional form of feminism marks the distance Femen has with the academic world<sup>1</sup>. In that sense, it potentially opens up a space for a new reflection on the formation of an academic field constituted around the woman as an object of study and the historicity of the gender category reproduced by this academic world. However, Femen’s positioning doesn’t really put into question the universalism constitutive of the disciplinarization of feminism. It actually re-implements it in the oppositional logic which provides the frame for the self-definition of their actions: Women (Femen) against patriarchal order, against dictatorship, against religion, against prostitution identified as enslavement and genocide of women. These kind of simplistic binary oppositions are the principles incarnated by the topless body of the protester in action. The universalism of feminism as the global

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1 It can be interpreted from the context of the feminist question in Ukraine (lack of a feminist field or even of feminism in general after the communist time according to Jeffrey Goldfard)

struggle for women's rights is re-instituted. It is re-articulated in and on the provocative body of the protester who then participates in the reproduction of the global imaginary and therefore to the hierarchy which informs such imaginary (Europe/Africa).

The meanings behind Femen's actions are supposed to be revealed by the slogans inscribed on their bodies. But the problem is that they often get completely unreadable in their performance. And if they do draw the attention of the public, they appear equivocal or simplistic ("Jesus is an aborted kid," "No demand, no offer," "My womb is sacred," etc...). A slogan in a protest is certainly not meant to present a detailed analysis. It is used to strike at a point of contention. We do not propose to interpret Femen's slogans or to criticize Femen's lack of perspective on such basis. What seems to us more problematic is that by inscribing these slogans on the topless body of the protester without engaging in parallel discussions, the Femen's initial politicization of the body might turn into a simple moral gesture, as if the act and the body involved in it would speak for themselves and wouldn't need to engage in a discussion with divergent positions. On their website, Femen explains in short paragraphs the reasons behind their interventions in different locations, but they seem to refuse to engage in a debate with groups with different positions on the issues they want to tackle<sup>1</sup>. They don't discuss with sex workers, they simulate the brothel and criminalize the customer; they don't discuss with Muslim women, they burn the Salafist flag in front of the Mosque of Paris. The politics of the "Fuck you!" constitutes the expression of certainty that Femen occupy the rightful position. In both the cases of the sex-workers and the Muslim women, Femen remain trapped within a model of binary oppositions in which the agency of the woman becomes essentially subjected to the existing relations of domination. They don't consider how new subjectivities can emerge from the complexity of social interactions, as it is the case when sex-workers actively displace the matter at stake on the level of working conditions, rather than keeping it on a moral ground. This is the reason why, ironically, Femen's stand on prostitution for example, can

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1 On April 21st, 2014 a group of six Chinese women (Hawthorne Sisters Student Alliance) staged a topless protest at the entrance of the Guangdong University of Technology against sexual discrimination. A few days later we posted it on the Femen's previous facebook account asking their opinion. There was none whatsoever. Also groups such as Muslim Women Against Femen and Feminists Against Femen have discussed the Femen on their pages, without receiving any responses.

reinforce the position of conservative groups on such issue, as our comparison with the Taiwanese instance is supposed to indicate.

To conclude, we have to stress that our critical understanding of Femen's politicization of the body does not lead us to make a choice between the pro/anti-Femen camp. Neither do we want to neutralize the ideological contradictions characterized by such split. We wanted to show that in their rapid development, the Femen have lost part of their capacity to produce new meanings and new subjectivities through the politicization of the body. The standardization of the topless body seems to be articulated to the global condition produced by the global mode of governmentality regulated by the NGO systematization. We indicated the exclusionary dimension of Femen's strategy, by trying to show how we can interpret it within the performative logic of their mode of actions. Regarding the more general question of the political use of the body, our analysis sheds light on the importance of the global contextualization of the body in action. We have seen indeed how Femen's desires for women's rights are bound to a geo-political imaginary mapping of the world rooted in the Ukrainian's marginal situation in Europe. We also hope that this paper might help us to raise questions about the performativity of the body regarding political expression. The possible self-enclosure of the Femen within the performative role of warrior at the expense of a relocalization of their protestations appeared to us as one major difficulty in what we would like to call the translation of their body politics.

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TRUPAT E DREJTUAR

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CONDUITES

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CONDUCTED BODIES



## Adossé au Bunker

CHRISTIANE VOLLAIRE

En 1975, l'architecte Paul Virilio écrivait *Bunker archéologie* à l'occasion d'une exposition. On peut y lire :

*Ce tour d'horizon sans accident me ramenait à mon propre poids, à la chaleur et à ce dossier solide contre lequel j'étais installé : ce massif de béton incliné, cette chose sans valeur qui n'avait su m'intéresser jusqu'alors autrement que comme un vestige de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, autrement que comme l'illustration d'une histoire, celle de la guerre totale.*<sup>1</sup>

On voudrait interroger ici, en Albanie dont le sol en est constellé, ce qu'est ce corps pesant adossé au massif de béton du bunker, dans une histoire européenne adossée à celle de la guerre totale. Ce que représente, dans sa massivité réelle autant que dans l'espace abstraitif qu'il produit, le bunker comme puissance de négation de la dynamique des corps et des fluidités de la circulation. Quel potentiel de destruction se nourrit de ce rapport à l'indestructible, et quelle violence s'édifie sensoriellement dans le rapport absolutiste à la protection.

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1 Paul Virilio, *Bunker archéologie*, Galilée, 2008, p. 15.



## 1. Un paysage interdit

Le bunker est un usage politique de l'habitat : son versant militaire. Mais il crée de ce fait aussi un usage politique du corps. Le texte de Virilio en introduit l'analyse par l'expérience autobiographique qu'il en fait : non pas celle d'un soldat, mais celle d'un enfant, né en 1932, à qui les abords de la mer sont interdits, dans les années quarante où l'occupant nazi édifie sur les côtes françaises le Mur de l'Atlantique. C'est donc d'un paysage interdit qu'il est question : interdit d'abord et interdit de regard. Un espace inhabitable, devenu terrain militaire, dans une zone occupée, sur le territoire français, par l'ennemi. En Albanie, l'expérience du bunker sera bien différente : elle est plus tardive (de 1967 à 1991) et entre dans un plan stratégique d'intériorisation par les habitants de la lutte contre l'envahisseur : elle se présente comme un plan de défense civile et de « guerre du peuple », dissociée de la profession militaire et de ses responsabilités spécifiques.

Il est clair que l'idéologie du bunker est liée à l'isolationnisme de l'Albanie des années soixante : ayant rompu avec l'Union soviétique de la déstalinisation, pour faire alliance avec la Chine maoïste beaucoup plus lointaine ; en rivalité avec la Yougoslavie titiste qui vise à l'englober ; voisinant avec la Grèce intégrée à l'OTAN, l'Albanie apparaît bien comme un îlot de résistance tous azimuts, dont l'isolement s'aggraverait encore à la fin des années soixante-dix, lors de la rupture avec la Chine. Le bunker est donc une figure de l'identité, comme le nid d'aigle : celle d'une position défensive et cernée, parfaitement adéquate à la réalité diplomatique du pays et à son modèle, dont elle est, aujourd'hui encore, et même comme gadget touristique (sous la forme de cendriers ou de cadeaux-souvenirs), un emblème et une représentation archétypale.

## 2. Le monument funéraire de l'expansionnisme

Il est saisissant de voir comment cette configuration isolationniste et défensive, qui semble caractériser l'usage du bunker dans l'Albanie des années 1960, entre en conflit manifeste avec l'idéologie expansionniste et offensive du système nazi des années trente et quarante, qui fait pourtant du bunker la construction majeure du Mur de l'Atlantique. Virilio met en évidence cette injonction paradoxale que constitue l'usage du bunker par l'Allemagne nazie, dans la résistance du Führer à en faire l'inspection militaire. Et il interprète ce refus à partir de l'analyse, donnée par Mao-Tsé-toung en 1942, de la stratégie nazie :

*Si Hitler est contraint de passer à la défense stratégique, le sort du fascisme est réglé ; en effet, un Etat comme celui du IIIème Reich a, dès sa naissance, fondé toute sa vie politique et militaire sur l'offensive.*<sup>1</sup>

« Monument funéraire du rêve allemand », le bunker sera en effet le dernier habitacle dans lequel le noyau dur de l'Allemagne nazie, incluant son chef, se donnera la mort au cœur même de Berlin, en avril 1945.

Virilio ne cesse de montrer comment cette architecture militaire est bel et bien une architecture funéraire, évoquant le mausolée, la crypte, les catacombes. Et Ismaël Kadaré le reliera au dispositif de la pyramide. En passant de l'offensive à la défensive, tout système, politique ou militaire, se sclérose et dégrade l'intention affirmative et énergisante de l'actif en frilosité du réactif. C'est *Mein Kampf* que cite ici Virilio :

*L'idée de protection hante et remplit la vie.*<sup>2</sup>

Mais le dispositif de protection est exactement le contraire d'un dispositif d'expansion. Il suppose le repli, la contrainte, le refus du déploiement, la présence permanente de l'empêchement. C'est de cette façon que Virilio décrit le bunker tel qu'il se vit de l'intérieur.

### 3. L'habitat devenu habit

Peser, embarrasser, gêner, figer, c'est bel et bien la dynamique du corps lui-même qui est empêchée par un habitat devenu « habit », et producteur par là-même de nouvelles habitudes du corps, ou, pour employer la terminologie bourdieusienne, d'un nouvel *habitus*.

Le bunker, parce qu'il est un espace politique, est aussi un espace esthétique au sens large : un mode de représentation de soi induit par l'architecture. Un soi contraint, empêché, obstrué par l'habitat. En prétendant protéger, l'espace architectural vise ici à faire de l'obstruction un mode d'existence, assujettissant l'occupant à de nouveaux modes de subjectivation : ceux de l'immobilisation. Virilio reprend plus loin le parallèle habitat / habit, pour le rapporter l'armement médiéval de la cuirasse.

Le corps « territorial » est ainsi en réalité un corps déterritorialisé au sens le plus dévitalisant du terme : privé d'échanges avec son environnement. L'habit-

1 Cité in Virilio, op. cit., p. 39.

2 Cité in Virilio, op. cit., p. 44.

cuirasse, à la manière d'une carapace, pétrifie le mouvement et immobilise la circulation. Mais il évacue aussi toutes les formes de porosité, tout ce qui, produisant de l'interaction, autorise de ce fait même la respiration. Et l'habitat cryptique devient de ce fait un tombeau. Le vécu constant de l'environnement comme danger produit l'effet mortifère d'une anticipation de la disparition, que l'expérience du bunker cristallise de façon performative. Par le bunker, le lien social est ainsi détissé au profit d'une thanato-politique du cimetière et de l'enfouissement, vecteurs d'une sensation d'oppression. Et cette épreuve mentale de l'oppression a son correspondant physique, puisque c'est en termes de pression que Virilio décrit l'espace du bunker, comme celui d'un sous-marin en milieu terrestre : résistant parce qu'intentionnellement inadapté aux caractéristiques hostiles d'un milieu destiné à l'évacuer.

Ce pourrait tout aussi bien être l'espace d'une soucoupe volante. En tout cas, d'un hors-sol. Et ce hors-sol, il le décrit dans les termes technologiques de la résistance des matériaux : béton armé ou béton contraint, le béton présente cette particularité d'être originellement un élément liquide, solidifié dans le moulage qui lui est donné, afin de n'être porteur d'aucune faille. Mais, de ce fait même, non seulement il ne présente aucune porosité, mais il ne repose paradoxalement sur aucune fondation. Virilio l'écrit :

*Le bunker n'est plus réellement fondé ; il flotte sur un sol qui n'est plus un socle à son équilibre, mais une étendue mouvante et aléatoire qui s'apparente, en la prolongeant, à l'étendue marine.*<sup>1</sup>

#### **4. Des lieux de non-communication absolue**

Cette indistinction du liquide et de l'ultra-solide, qui caractérise le bunker, le dissocie radicalement du territoire qu'il occupe. Étranger à son environnement, sans ancrage, il fait irruption sur son terrain comme en état de flottaison. Nombre de bunkers du Mur de l'Atlantique sont construits sur le sable, posés sur une étendue non fixe, accessible aux aléas des marées, aux mouvements de l'éco-système liquidien dont ils sont proches. Et, pour cette raison aussi, le béton ne subira pas le sort des matériaux plus ou moins organiques : il pourra s'enfoncer dans le sol, ou se renverser si le sol se modifie, mais il ne tombera pas en ruines, il ne se défera pas comme un édifice de pierre ou de bois. Il continuera d'être posé comme un OVNI dans le paysage,

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1 *Ibid.*, p. 61.

éventuellement en position de bascule, mais pas en situation d'effondrement. Il continue ainsi bel et bien de remplir sa fonction de résistance au milieu, dans le temps même où son usage est devenu obsolète. Les bunkers de la côte atlantique, lorsque Virilio vient les photographier entre 1958 et 1965, sont dans cette situation d'obsolescence. De même que les 700 000 bunkers (un pour quatre habitants) répartis selon la décision d'Enver Hodja sur le territoire entier de l'Albanie, en zone rurale comme en zone urbaine, privés, depuis les années quatre-vingt-dix et la chute des blocs, du sens défensif qui leur avait été originellement donné.

Le chapitre « Esthétique de la disparition », dans l'édition du Demi-cercle de 1991 qui reproduit les images, est entièrement consacré à la visibilité de cette obsolescence : celle des basculements de l'objet dans le sable.

Les bunkers sont des espaces d'enfouissement de la vie, et pour cela même des non-espaces, des lieux de non-communication absolue, dont le secret de fabrication constitue un danger aux yeux de ceux-là mêmes qui en ont passé commande. D'où le sort réservé aux ingénieurs militaires qui les ont conçus : Fritz Todt pour l'Allemagne nazie, ou Josif Zegali pour l'Albanie d'Enver Hodja. Il semble que dans tous les cas le concepteur doive être, d'une manière ou d'une autre, éliminé par le commanditaire, comme dépositaire d'un code qui doit demeurer caché.

## **5. Une « archéologie de la rencontre brutale »**

Mais l'insécurité se renforce des mutations historiques du génie militaire lui-même. Le béton comme matériau de construction s'invente dans les années 1850, et trouve son plein usage dans les années 1930, avec l'utilisation du béton pré-contraint qui augmente la résistance du matériau. Le concept militaire du bunker de béton naît dans le temps même de l'invention de l'arme nucléaire : c'est quand émerge la possibilité d'un environnement désintégré à partir du cœur même de la matière, que se pose la question d'un absolutisme de la protection. L'hostilité environnementale rendue totale par le potentiel nucléaire, la parade est celle de l'imperméabilisation totale au milieu. Le fantasme en fera fleurir les romans de science-fiction, mais la réalité demeure, sur les côtes de l'Europe occidentale comme sur l'ensemble du territoire albanais menacé par la guerre froide.

Initié par la rupture du pacte germano-soviétique, reconfiguré par la rupture sino-soviétique, puis mis en danger par l'alliance sino-américaine, le système albanais, enjeu des affrontements entre les blocs rivé à la côte

adriatique, produit le paradigme du bunker non plus comme pis-aller d'une idéologie expansionniste acculée à la défensive sur le Mur de l'Atlantique, mais comme destin biopolitique du nid d'aigle inexpugnable, et figure de l'isolationnisme. Une représentation spécifique de la spatialité, dont l'idéologie du ghetto pourrait être l'un des modes de continuation, reconfigurée dans la multiplicité des rapports contemporains à la question de l'immunité. Le bunker comme paradigme de l'immunitaire.

Mais Virilio l'interroge aussi comme figure des régimes de temporalité guerriers, autour de l'affrontement, dans ce qu'il appelle une « archéologie de la rencontre brutale » :

*La construction des infrastructures stratégiques et tactiques au cours des âges n'est en fait qu'une « archéologie de la rencontre brutale » ; de l'impact à la collision et au télescopage autoroutier.<sup>1</sup>*

L'impact est militaire, mais la collision qui en relève est beaucoup plus largement technologique : l'accident autoroutier, dans ses réitérations statistiques, devient ainsi l'un des modes de la « rencontre brutale » : non pas intentionnelle à la manière de l'agression guerrière, et pourtant parfaitement programmable. Et le véhicule est bien cet enclos renforcé dont on éprouve la résistance au choc, et dont le char blindé pourrait être le modèle : un bunker itinérant.

La violence des chocs devient ainsi proportionnelle à la rapidité de l'impact, par rapport à laquelle la résistance doit être totale et sans délai, produisant une accélération du temps de guerre, depuis l'objectif du *Blitzkrieg* nazi jusqu'à la réalisation du bombardement atomique américain, intégralement destructeur en une fraction de seconde. Virilio note ainsi que l'extension territoriale du potentiel guerrier dans les guerres coloniales, puis mondiales, va de pair avec la réduction de la temporalité militaires des sociétés industrielles.

Or c'est précisément cette extrême réduction du temps de guerre pour les puissances militaro-industrielles, qui nécessite l'appareil défensif le plus étanche, le plus résistant à l'impact, le plus anticipateur ... et donc le plus contraignant pour le temps de paix.

Un temps de paix relativement long, mais intégralement occupé par la préparation d'un temps de guerre extrêmement bref : c'est cette temporalité

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1 *Ibid.*, p. 27.

que gère l'édification des bunkers. Et en cela elle préfigure la précarité inquiète et l'ordre sécuritaire du temps de paix contemporain. L'architecte du IIIème Reich, Albert Speer, en élabore l'organisation du travail. Et Virilio montre comment le seul grand responsable nazi qui soit resté dans la plus totale impunité est celui dont les projets allaient encore au-delà des visées du Führer :

*Speer propose à Hitler un abaissement extrême du niveau de vie allemand, un durcissement draconien des conditions de travail, que le Führer refuse.<sup>1</sup>*

## **6. La « loi des ruines » contre le droit du travail**

La question que la perspective de la guerre permet de résoudre, c'est celle du droit du travail. De même que Jules César ne faisait de prisonniers qu'en vue de leur faire construire les ponts dont il avait besoin, et que l'esclavage était de ce fait, plus encore que la conquête territoriale, la véritable finalité de la guerre, de même l'extension des armées sur le front de l'Est doit avoir pour finalité, aux yeux de Speer, d'enrôler les prisonniers dans le travail forcé. Et quand les bombardements sur l'Allemagne feront la démonstration qu'une population apeurée ne peut pas se rebeller contre les chefs qui l'ont conduite au massacre, Speer proposera d'enrôler dans le travail forcé les Allemands eux-mêmes, pour une mobilisation intégrale des forces dans la préparation incessante du conflit en cours, n'ouvrant pas d'autre perspective à la guerre totale que celle du suicide :

*La collision entre l'arme et le bâtiment a eu lieu, la « loi des ruines » a pris un nouveau sens, le constructeur est devenu destructeur, l'architecte au pouvoir est devenu l'architecte du pouvoir.<sup>2</sup>*

Speer, succédant à Todt après le crash de son avion, passe du statut d'architecte à celui d'ingénieur militaire, et au final de stratège. Et la « loi des ruines » qu'il met en œuvre tend à faire du pays entier un vaste bunker, dont les habitants ne sont plus que les constructeurs, et le processus de construction un processus d'autodestruction. Virilio fait de l'architecte du IIIème Reich le plus jusqu'au boutiste de ses stratèges. Mais en même temps, on peut y voir un préfigurateur du rapport au travail dans le monde qui commencera avec la fin de la guerre froide.

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1 *Ibid.*, p. 77.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 78.

Cet enrôlement forcé s'apparente en effet bel et bien, rétrospectivement, dans ce qui est devenu le modèle de la globalisation contemporaine, aux processus d'invisibilisation du travail, de clandestinisation de la main d'œuvre et de délocalisation, qui permettent de transformer l'Europe de Schengen, de façon corrélative, en un espace de fluidification pour la circulation des capitaux, et en une forteresse inabordable pour les migrants : la « loi des ruines » produit ces espaces bunkerisés, ghettoisés par la discrimination. Foucault disait, dans son cours au Collège de France « *Il faut défendre la société* » :

*Plutôt que le triple préalable de la loi, de l'unité du sujet – qui fait de la souveraineté la source du pouvoir et le fondement des institutions –, je crois qu'il faut prendre le triple point de vue des techniques, de l'hétérogénéité des techniques et de leur effet d'assujettissement.*<sup>1</sup>

Il semble évident que l'analyse de la technologie du bunker vérifie pleinement une telle assertion : c'est une pensée technocratique du bunker, de ses usages et de ses fonctions, qui permet de comprendre comment son dispositif assujettit par ses fonctions mêmes de subjectivation, et peut faire d'un peuple singularisé la troupe innombrable d'une population asservie à un mécanisme d'enfermement. C'est aussi cette analyse qui permet de comprendre le monde contemporain comme séquelle de ce qu'il a prétendu éviter, des pouvoirs qu'il a prétendu vaincre et dont il a en réalité favorisé le retour spectral.

C'est ainsi que Foucault montre le glissement de la responsabilité de l'architecte à celle de l'ingénieur dans ce qu'il appelle « l'Etat de police », qui n'est nullement l'Etat totalitaire, mais l'Etat tel qu'il s'est constitué depuis le XVII<sup>ème</sup> siècle, à la période du « Grand renfermement ». Il établit ainsi une périodisation permettant de comprendre, par les mutations techniques successives, les choix politiques qu'elles font apparaître. Parlant de la France du XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle, il écrit ainsi :

*(Les architectes) ne sont ni les ingénieurs ni les techniciens des trois grandes variables : territoire, communication et vitesse. Ce sont là des choses qui échappent à leur domaine.*<sup>2</sup>

1 Michel Foucault, « *Il faut défendre la société* », Paris, Gallimard - Seuil, 1997.

2 Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, t. II, Gallimard Quarto, 2001, p. 1093-94.

## 7. L'inhabitable capital

Cette dépossession des architectes par les ingénieurs est évidemment pensée par Virilio, architecte et urbaniste écrivant sur Albert Speer, architecte devenu responsable de l'ingénierie militaire du III<sup>ème</sup> Reich au tournant de l'année 1942. D'une part il ne s'agit plus de penser les espaces en termes d'appropriation, d'équilibre et de convivialité, mais en termes de pouvoir, de stratégie et de domination. Or Virilio montre qu'un tel concept, proprement militaire, a véritablement contaminé la vie civile dans un processus d'enrôlement. L'Etat de police devient alors quasiment indistinct de l'Etat de guerre. D'un Etat en tout cas sur pied de guerre, moins pour combattre un ennemi extérieur que pour assujettir un dominé intérieur, et reconfigurer les processus de subjectivation en processus de domination.

*L'espace est enfin homogénéisé, la guerre absolue est devenue réalité, le monolithe est son monument.<sup>1</sup>*

Le monolithe sans faille du bunker, devenu monument de l'espace inhabitable, c'est l'espace civil fondu dans le modèle de l'hostilité. Dans un petit ouvrage paru en 2010 à la suite de la crise des subprimes aux USA, par laquelle un système financier prédateur a fait perdre la propriété de leur logement, entre 2007 et 2011, à des milliers de petits épargnants, l'architecte Jean-Paul Dollé écrit :

*Le capitalisme (...) se présente maintenant, non pas tant comme désir d'acquérir, de posséder, que, plus fondamentalement, d'extorquer, d'exproprier, de gagner, de maîtriser, ce qui revient dans tous les cas à faire disparaître le concurrent, détruire l'adversaire. Annihiler, tel est le but.<sup>2</sup>*

Le paradigme de la guerre devient ainsi le modèle de la vie civile capitaliste telle qu'elle se déploie dans la dimension de « l'inhabitable » : une hostilité fondamentale qui vient occuper les formes de la subjectivation et se substituer aux potentiels d'intersubjectivité. Dollé le montre, c'est précisément dans le rapport à l'habitat qu'elle va se manifester :

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1 Paul Virilio, *op. cit.*, p. 51, 52, 54.

2 Jean-Paul Dollé, *L'Inhabitable Capital*, Lignes, 2010, p. 108.



*L'habitat, la maison, comme chacun l'expérimente dans sa vie, constitue la forme la plus élémentaire d'exister en propre et de se situer dans le monde. La crise déclenchée à l'occasion des subprimes révélerait en ce sens ce qui, dans le mode d'habitation d'où procède et que génère le système capitaliste, met en crise non seulement le mode de production capitaliste mais la manière dont les hommes habitent le monde, c'est-à-dire leur existence même.*<sup>1</sup>

*Bunker Archéologie* de Virilio ne nous parle pas d'un monde passé dont on viendrait explorer les décombres. Il fait au contraire le lien, dans la seconde moitié du XXème siècle, entre les systèmes qu'on a pu qualifier de « totalitaires » et la réalité du monde « libre » contemporain qui a prétendu les vaincre et s'en débarrasser.

Il nous donne à entendre le double langage par lequel la « protection » du bunker sécuritaire est le motif même de l'exposition aux formes contemporaines les plus insidieuses de la domination économique : celles qui fondent sur le renfermement des corps l'usage même du politique.

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1 *Ibid.*, p. 12 et 14.

« I get on board and validate my ticket »:  
The machines are speaking to us and speaking in our  
place... Should we orientate ourselves differently?

DIANE MORGAN



Image 1: The buses of the Paris region: “Je monte, je valide” (I get on board and validate my ticket”).

In the Paris region the buses speak to you and speak for you. They tell you that when you embark them, you have to get your ticket stamped, or swipe it, or show it: *“je monte, je valide”*. In this way they remind you that you need to have a valid ticket if you want to use the public transport system. All fair and good. I know that when my body gets onto a bus, I need to buy it, or have bought it, a place. It is the least I can do if I want to benefit from all the advantages that a transport system, subsidized by the council and The State, offers. I accept this condition and sincerely hope that there will always be a public transport system. However, I confess to being a bit disconcerted by this interpellation...

At my “Club Med” gym I also pay the price for my body. Well maybe not so much for my actual body but rather for the body I think I want to, or should, have. But I do accept the responsibility for this decision. There too the machines speak. The exercise machines, the showers, the hairdryers, announce (each speaking in its “own voice”): “I am being serviced”.



Images 2: The machines at CMG: “I am being serviced”

These breakdowns are annoying as I do pay a lot for the privilege of using this equipment. However, the fact that they do not try to hide their failure, but instead voluntarily communicate, indeed even freely expose, their weaknesses to me probably reconciles me, the discerning customer, with my initial choice of gym. I remain faithful to “my club” and therefore implicitly

continue to support their “ethos” as exemplified by their logos: “I have my mother’s eyes, the rest is thanks to Club Med Gym” or “CMG: a healthy body in the mind of a club”...

Having painfully got through the “body pump”, “body sculpture”, “tummy, bum and thighs” classes, I stiffly emerge from the underground universe into the blinding daylight of the public thoroughfare. I need money and the ATM I turn to announces to me, seemingly with pride: “I am a multifunctional apparatus”. I am probably pleased for it but confess to being not really sure why I am being given this information, and what I am supposed to do about it. All I want is a bit of cash to do the shopping...

I am all for interaction, for a pleasant exchange between citizens (and also with those others do not enjoy the privilege of this status). I am therefore prepared to stand by those organizational forms that bring us together into a contractual body as consenting individuals and groups. However, I am for such systems as an autonomous person who has integrated behavioural principles for- if not by- herself in the name of a democratic society (probably yet to-come). I therefore cannot allow myself to be considered as an immature and irresponsible person who is not capable of operating in this world without being first prompted by a “talking” bus pretending to be me. I should also not be presented as someone who is so backwardly superstitious that they really believe that technology possesses a spirit and can therefore express itself. However, I do have to acknowledge that I often find that technology is far more dynamic, powerful and effective than me. I do admit that I am a mere finite creature, one who is already tired by the constant visual and audio solicitation of all those screens and signs... The long and short of it is that I feel the need for more space, for a different sort of spatiality within which to orientate myself, one that feels more expansive, more joyful; an alternative playspace (*Spielraum*) that thrives on a less formatted, less corporate, more spontaneous, more lively sense of citizenship<sup>1</sup>. Where should I look for it? How can I invent it?

Over these past few days together in Korça, we’ve been chewing over the question of the “political uses of the body”. But what exactly would a non-political use of the body be? Does it really exist? The precise place where our body comes into this world, and where it leaves it without a life, are situated in a context that is, when it comes to it, political. It is also often indissociably tied

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1 For « *Spielraum* » see Benjamin (1989, 377 ; 2002 117). See also e.g. Kant (1986, 130 & 134 ; 1988, 88, 91 §21 & §23) and Schiller (1982, 60-1 & 94-109).

in with the production, the distribution, the exchange and the consumption of goods and services, i.e. with economic considerations. One's chances of having a good life are variable and money could be a deciding factor in this, even if, as Zola clearly shows in "How one dies" ("Comment on meurt"), money is far from being a guarantee for the happiness of being surrounded by friends and benevolent family until one's dying day. However having said that, a life without money can also be downright miserable, and even unjust (Zola 2009)! It is precisely here that the life and death of a body can be considered to be part of politics. Also the situations into which we place our bodies, voluntarily or not, e.g. the workplaces in which they are exercised, are politicized. Even the social places, where our bodies can express themselves more freely, and even relax themselves, are not devoid of political signification. The political in this context might mean the field of possibilities that I have on offer, compared to that of others. Everything can become political, and maybe always should become so. Or maybe not...Should we not hold back a residue (*un reste*), a corporeal remainder, in the very name of a politics that is more "utopian", less constrained by conventions and compromises?

For Walter Benjamin, the revolutionary future went hand-in-hand with the construction of a « collective body » whose space (*Leibraum*) was interpenetrated with that of the image (*Bildraum*). In his essay on surrealism, he affirms that technology is in the process of organising a new *physis* for "the collectivity ». As he says in his essay on Kraus, this new humanism (*Menschheit*) was to break with the « classical » configuration of the subject. It would thereby leave behind it even authors as radical as Hebel, Nietzsche, Büchner and Rimbaud whose materialism is still « metaphysical», not yet entirely « anthropological» (Benjamin 1991, 309-310, 335; 2005a, 217; 2005b 448 ). According to Benjamin, one cannot cross the threshold between these two « materialisms » without leaving the former behind us [*es geht nicht bruchlos überzuführen*]. These authors cannot accompany us right to the end. With them there is something that "remains": « *es bleibt ein Rest* », that shouldn't be there. To anticipate my argument I volunteer right now that for me this « remainder » is our relation to our body (as a *Körper*, or rather as a configuration of *Körper/Leib* ). It is that which amongst other things, resists our complete assimilation into the collective body (*der kollektiver Leib*). It is this assimilation that Benjamin advocates in the following passage:

Only when in technology body and image space so interpenetrate that all revolutionary tension becomes bodily collective innervation, and all the

bodily innervations of the collective become revolutionary discharge, has reality transcended itself to the extent demanded by the *Communist Manifesto* (ibid 2005a, 217-218).

Erst wenn [in der Technologie] sich *Leib und Bildraum* so tief durchdringen, daß alle revolutionäre Spannung *leibliche* kollektive Innervation, alle *leiblichen* Innervationen des Kollektivs revolutionäre Entladung werden, hat die Wirklichkeit so sehr sich selbst übertroffen, wie «Das kommunistische Manifest» es fordert (ibid 310).

I find Benjamin's analysis very problematical. To be frank, I consider that his ideas are often not analysed critically enough, in the light of our contemporary situation. We are thereby actually doing him a disservice. In today's society with the predominance of image-spaces (*Bildräume*) on our bodies and minds, Benjamin's proposition, if accepted uncritically, runs the risk of making us fall into the same immature infatuation for new technologies that he wanted to warn us against. A total immersion into this «second nature» would eliminate all possibility of critical distance<sup>1</sup>. It was Lukács who first evoked this “second nature” in 1920. He pointed out that, even if it is a world that was initially invented by us, we no longer completely master it (Lukács 1971a, 53; 1971b 62). Benjamin seems to push us to get closer and closer to this technology, to abolish all distance that separates us from it. If “we” are the “masses”, he appears to announce that we want to “bring things closer to us”. He suggests that “the need imposes itself to possess the object as close as possible, in its image, or rather in its reflection, in its reproduction...” (Benjamin 2002, 105).

Consumer society also pushes us have everything at hand's reach. It entices us to take pleasure in the tactility of its interactive apparatuses which insistently promise us easy communication with everybody, wherever they are, and whenever we like, and like it we should<sup>2</sup> It suffices that the mobile

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1 See Benjamin's definition of fascism, the aestheticisation of the political.

2 I note also the impoverishment of our haptic sense reduced to prodding, sometimes manically when they don't respond, at « tactile screens ». See also Adorno's « Minima Moralia » §19 « Nicht anklopfen » 'Do not knock » for his analysis of how our gestures are becoming coarser, less refined, due to the adverse effects of « smart », all too « smart » technology.

“vibrates” in a pocket for us to act, or rather react, often immediately, with the same alienating obedience described by Lukács almost one century ago now. To use his words from the 1922 “Reification” essay, it is with a quasi-“fatalistic necessity” (« *eine fatalistische Notwendigkeit* ») that we synchronise our bodies and minds with the speed of these machines. Such automatism certainly evokes the fetishistic regime so well described by Lukács, in which the “acting” subject is transformed “into a [mere] receptive organ ready to pounce on opportunities already created by the system of laws” [*ein blosses Auffassungsorgan von erkannten Gesetzmässigkeitschancen*]” (Lukács 1985, 265-266; 1983, 128-130; 2007, 163-5). Such a system animates itself and, as we are implicated in it, thereby stimulates us too, by inciting “the movement of things under whose control we find ourselves, instead of controlling them” (Marx 1976, 71; 1979, 167-8; 2005, 89).

In this scenario our «actions» become predictable as they are up to point already preprogrammed. We thereby run the risk of closing ourselves to non-calculable eventualities. Hence the importance for Alain Brossat I imagine, for, alas, I missed his actual presentation (“Le philosophe renversé”) and the ensuing discussion, of what befalls us, what trips us up, i.e. what prevents us from « following through » on our « projects », what thwarts the fulfilment of our « objectives », what puts a check to our « high performance », ruining our aims to « manage » the future. The illusion of “risk management” paradoxically creates the danger of us finding ourselves even more affected by what happens to us. We find ourselves exposed to The Event if, or when, it comes. Ineffectively armed against what is unforeseen, we close ourselves to a future that doesn’t yet exist, that we therefore can’t possibly pre-empt and maybe shouldn’t try to. We aren’t ready for “It”, and in any case could never have been really prepared in advance. The incalculable eventualities that can befall us are often things to do with « love and death ». They make themselves felt so unexpectedly, even if they are part and parcel of life itself. These “things”- the body in all its states, the feelings, the thoughts of the individual in *his/her* relations with *his/her* others- are mentioned in passing by Benjamin, in a variant of “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility”. He evokes them in terms of another “utopian will” that emerges from these major life issues [*die Lebensfragen*] of the individual as, I’d say, a body [*Körper*]. They demand that they too be one day incorporated as such into the revolutionary project for the collective body (*kollektiver Leib*)

(Benjamin 1989, 665-6; 2002, 134-5). But when would that moment be? When could it have been? And what about today? Where do we stand in relation to all that now? What quality of relation between these two bodies do we live today thanks to our « technological revolution »?

Benjamin advocated that the cinematographic « imagespace » offered us a training-ground for making us fit for the struggles facing us in modern life (ibid 365 & 111). For him this technology had the potential to overturn the old social order and to construct another one, more egalitarian and therefore richer. Nothing is less certain nowadays, I'd say. [That said I'm prepared to retract some of what I've just said when I see good films, especially documentaries like those we've seen together over these past few days. However Kujtim Çashku himself spoke with ambivalence of the power of the image, I therefore permit myself to advance in my argument with his benediction as a filmmaker...]. Bound by these image-spaces, we can no longer « move freely », Lukács again, as we do not recognise the « intelligible contingency» (*intelligible Zufälligkeit*), that animates them (Lukács op cit). This runs the risk of preventing us from seeing that the world could be organised differently, with other things, and maybe for some, with less things.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Lukács had already described a modern life that had become « senseless » (*nicht mehr sinnfällig*) as it had estranged itself from our senses (*sinnesfremden*). Somehow even (more?) now we remain unsatisfactorily connected with The World, whilst being increasingly told that we can be in touch, anytime, anywhere<sup>1</sup>. It suffices to choose the right server. This commercialization of our world means that even- or especially- as a digitalised nomad, we lack playspace (*Spielraum*). How can we orientate ourselves differently? What should we do with the “remainder”- if any remains...- of what has not been assimilated into the coalescence between the *image-space* and the *body-space* that was in principle welcomed by Benjamin, but which is now surely sold to us by capitalist multinationals?

I return to my point of departure: those talking buses and all those other machines whose screens speak to us. But surely all they are doing is giving

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1 Here I am thinking of Kant's « cosmopolitical » challenge to us to think the world as « a whole ». This idea has an important “regulative” use as an “utopian” *focus imaginarius* (see Kant 1983 533-4 B672- 673, & Morgan (2013, 120-139; 2014, 126-154). As Kant points out, “the whole world”, of which we are part, is not a destination we could ever reach as such. Nevertheless we should act responsibly towards “it”.



us an image of the idea to which we adhere in any case, that of collective solidarity with a municipal transport system, with a club or a society (albeit it a bank, la Société générale!)? What's the big problem? Well one of the problems lies precisely in the fact that it is they who produce these images and not us. It is the "second nature" as described by Lukács and not the "other nature" described by Kant in the *Critique of Judgement*, that is a production of our own imagination (Lukács 1971a, 53; 1971b 62). I remind you of this passage §49 where Kant writes:

The imagination (as a productive faculty of cognition) is a powerful agent for creating, as it were, another nature out the material supplied to it by actual nature ».

Die Einbildungskraft (als produktives Erkenntnisvermögen) ist nämlich sehr mächtig in Schaffung gleichsam einer anderen Natur, aus dem Stoffe, den ihr die wirkliche gibt (Kant 1986, 246; 1988, 176).

Lukács wanted to attract our attention to the gaps that he saw existing between the structures, constructions, forms [*«die Gebilde»*] (which compose the stage [*Schauplatz*]), and the basis [*Substrat*] of our psychical and physical lives, and transindividual and existential necessities [*die überpersönlichen, seinsollenden Notwendigkeiten*] (Lukács 1971a 53; 1971b 62). We do definitely need images in order to orientate ourselves in this world. Kant also spoke of those « figurative representations » « *bildliche Vorstellungen* » that must be associated even with the most abstract of our ideas, with those furthest from our senses. It is these «figurative representations» that introduce «sense/ meaning» and «signification» [*Sinn und Bedeutung*] into our ideas and thereby help us to orientate ourselves in this world (Kant 1988, 267; 2001, 7). These "figurative representations" accompany us everywhere and we have to produce, and reproduce, them incessantly as they are necessary for us to be able to situate ourselves as a person, endowed with a body and a mind, in our world. Kant explains that the original meaning of "orientation" is geographical : it means to use one direction to find the others (ibid 269; 8). This capacity is inherent, but it becomes a habit through use. We are always identifying our position in relation to a wider context. We find ourselves already placed within a region [*eine Weltgebend*] having previously divided the horizon into four directions- north, south, east, west- in relation to, what we conventionally

call, “the rise of sun” [*den Aufgang*] (ibid). Starting from where we thus find ourselves, we head off, orientating ourselves as we go. But this sense of orientation is not just visual (ibid)<sup>1</sup>: it does not solely depend on the view of the sun, or, in its absence, of the moon and stars (for in Kant’s Königsberg the streets were still sufficiently dark for one to see the celestial skies)<sup>2</sup>. Even an astronomer, if he just puts his bets on the optical, on what he sees, would be lost in outer space, says Kant. In addition to vision, we need the feeling [*das Gefühl*] of a difference between our two sides, the right and the left. This distinction is felt in me as a subject. It is simply a feeling [*ein blosses Gefühl*], inasmuch as it does not derive from an outer intuition; there is no perceptible (i.e. visible) difference between these two sides<sup>3</sup>. Even when equipped with this distinction as a tool with which to carve up space, I can still get lost if the usual position of things around this differentiated body of mine is disturbed in any way. We distinguish in this way without the stable support of a ‘real difference’, anchored biologically, whilst depending on how the things in this world are distributed around this (partially “phantasmatic”) body<sup>4</sup>. Our position as « subject » is thereby far from being invincible; we have no reason to be presumptuous. But nevertheless, despite what might look like adverse circumstances, we do get some things done. We construct our world incessantly, more or less with conscience. We oriente ourselves, more or less well.

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- 1 Compare this analysis with Benjamin’s repeated criticisms that Kant reduces our experience of the cosmos to the merely optical e.g. « To the Planetarium » in *In One-Way Street* « [the cosmos is consign[ed] to individual [instead of communally] as the poetic rapture of starry nights » in Benjamin (1991b ; 147 ; 2004, 486 ) ...
  - 2 Above the heads of today’s city dweller, there are no longer any « starry heavens »: atmospheric pollution, including lighting, has ostensibly extinguished the skies.... With his « *Villes éteintes* » (*Darkened Skies*) project, the photographer Thierry Cohen goes in search of this missing celestial vault along the latitudinal lines of our metropolises, tracking it down in the desert and in other less densely populated localities so as to transpose it back onto our urbanised horizons. He thereby reminds us of what we have lost, or rather shows us what is still there but what we can no longer see in e.g. Los Angeles or in Rio. Needless to say, for Kant the “starry heavens” are a constitutive part of what we are, and could become. Their “loss”, and their eventual “recovery” is therefore of prime significance...
  - 3 Kant’s analysis of the territorialisation of the body is far more complicated than my reading here acknowledges, see e.g. his « Concerning the Ultimate Differentiation of Regions in Space », also Morgan 2000, 41-3.
  - 4 See at this point, Foucault 2009, 17.

Kant's notion of orientation, as a comparative approach whose practice leads us on, applies just as well to intellectual orientation. In order to exercise itself well, reason needs directions, constructions, bases, limits. Or rather, reason feels the need for them. Or better still, Kant reiterates: given that reason does not feel, it would be best to say that reason perceives its lack of support and therefore its drive for knowledge produces the "feeling of a need" for these aids, these tools, these intellectual compasses in order to guide itself (*Die Vernunft fühlt nicht; sie sieht ihren Mangel ein, und wirkt durch den Erkenntnistrieb das Gefühl des Bedürfnisses*) (Kant 1988, 274-275; 2001, 12-13). The touchstone for this subject who ventures into the darkness, groping the things around it so as to have a way through this world, is to think freely for oneself (*selbst denken*) (ibid 280-283; 16-8). But how is one supposed to do that? How should we engage with those social apparatuses who probably do speak some of our own language about being an autonomous citizen? How are we to "get on board and validate" (*monter et valider*) as consenting adults, i.e. whilst holding onto our "maturity" [*Mündigkeit*] (Kant: 1997b 53; 1994, 54)?

Kant proposes several tips for becoming a "free thinker". He firstly suggests that we should always try not to judge in a determinate way when we don't know what we are talking about, that way ignorance will not become a source of error. This might strike us as an eminently reasonable suggestion, but it isn't often adhered to! This said, when we need to act, even when we don't know the whole situation, we should do whilst taking full responsibility for our decisions. We must go in there, into the situation or problematic, using strategic methods to guide us. For example, in order to conceive what is limited, we need a notion of what is not; it is under these conditions that we give a place to someone like God, to someone who could be the origin of things. However, as for angels and fairies, we are best without them. Such winged «visual representations» [*bildliche Vorstellungen* »] can even become sources of distraction which lead us astray (Kant 1988 272; 2001, 10-11). But the most important point for thinking freely is to resist all constraint [*Zwang*] on our thoughts (ibid 280 & 16). We should not allow someone just to speak for us, to have custody over us. We should not accept laws that we have not in some way concurred with, or could have agreed to. We do however need limits and laws. Thoughts let loose can drive us mad. Our pathway to enlightenment must avoid the trap of enthusiasm, into which we fall when we get all excited, thinking that we possess the truth when we are

only holding onto things of no substance. We must beware of just believing things that have been handed down from generation to generation without having reflected critically about their status or value for ourselves (and for others). We deceive ourselves if we believe that enlightenment [*Aufklärung*] depends on the quantity of “information” that we “have”. Amassing information is not knowing. Too much information can mean that we lose our way. To enlighten oneself necessarily implies an exercise in self limitation, a knowing when to say “no, that’s not for me” – or rather, “that’s not for me because it- this action, this thought- is not for others either, it could not become, or shouldn’t even become a universal principle”. To use one’s own reason necessitates that one ask oneself each time that one is supposed to take something on board:

...whether one could find it feasible to make the ground or the rule on which one assumes it into a universal principle for the use of reason (ibid 18).

...ob man es wohl tunlich finde, den Grund, warum man etwas annimmt, oder auch die Regel, die aus dem, was man annimmt, folgt, zum allgemeinen Grundsatzes seines Vernunftgebrauchs zu machen (ibid 283).

For Kant, if I get on board, it is because I’ve already ‘validated’ as best I can. One doesn’t need to preach to me. I’ve been educated too and I continue to learn for myself. One certainly shouldn’t put words in my mouth. I am not completely egotistical. I do think of others, I downright have to. It is precisely for these reasons that I resist all forms of total mobilization that I cannot quite situate according to my “own” sense of orientation. This “sense”, whilst it is “mine”, is not really something I possess as such. It is part of an ongoing process of adjustment to what one holds dear. In other words, it is part of a project to reassess what we want, and do not want, to take on board. Such a reassessment is important. It could also be interesting, even amusing. It could create a collective *Spielraum* if we did it, at least to some extent, together, and not just as individual/ individualists. But with what body/bodies?: *Leib, Körper* or *Leib/Körper*? <sup>1</sup>

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1 As a way of exploring the distinction between Leib/ Körper we could start with a consideration of Benjamin’s “Schemata zum psychophysischen Problem” [“Outline of the Psychophysical Problem”] (1991c).

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## Aestheticization of Post-1989 Neoliberal Capitalism: From the Forms of Life to the Political Uses of Bodies<sup>1</sup>

JOYCE C. H. LIU

### Abstract

This paper addresses the question of bio-politics that regulates and shapes people into different forms of life in today's societies, particularly in the post-1989 neoliberal capitalist conditions that we can observe in China. I call it the aestheticization of neoliberal capitalism. My concern in this paper is with the aestheticization of the neoliberal capitalism that was manipulated and executed by the contemporary States. I shall discuss the double cycle of the use and consumption of bodies in the artistic labor through my reading of a contemporary Chinese artist Xu Bing (1955-). The primary process of the uses of the bodies by the State, the *polis*, took us to the question of the forms of life under the dictate of the political economy as discussed by Giorgio Agamben, and the question as to how and why human life, through the uses of bodies, is shaped, measured, calculated, regulated and processed into various forms of life. In order to think the power of life or the potential of life that would not be always already administered and distributed according to the reason of the *polis*, I juxtapose François Jullien's formulation of the concept of *shi* (potential, inclination, tendency) that he derived from classical

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Chinese philosophy with the Western concept of *potential/potestas* as well as from the ancient Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi; and I discuss the possibility of a new critical and political use of body through the politics of aesthetics as this possibility presents itself in Xu's work.

### Keywords

Bio-politics, Neoliberalism, Agamben, François Jullien, *Shi*, Potential

To think . . . at once to be affected by one's own receptiveness and experience in each and every thing that is thought a pure power of thinking. Only if I am not always already and solely enacted, but rather delivered to a possibility and a power, only if living and intending and apprehending themselves are at stake each time in what I live and intend and apprehend—only if, in other words, there is thought—only then can a form of life become, in its own factness and thingness, *form-of-life*, in which it is never possible to isolate something like naked life.

—Giorgio Agamben

*Means without End: Notes on Politics*

. . . to think a form-of-life, a human life entirely removed from the grasp of the law and a use of bodies and of the world that would never be substantiated into an appropriation. That is to say again: to think life as that which is never given as property but only as a common use.

Such a task will demand the elaboration of a theory of use—of which Western philosophy lacks even the most elementary principles—and, moving forward from that, a critique of the operative and governmental ontology that continues, under various disguises, to determine the destiny of the human species. This task remains reserved for the final volume of *Homo sacer*.

—Giorgio Agamben

*The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life*

This paper addresses the question of bio-politics that regulates and shapes people into different forms of life in today's societies, particularly in the post-1989 neoliberal capitalist conditions that we can observe in China. I call it the aestheticization of neoliberal capitalism. I shall discuss the double cycle of the use and consumption of bodies in the artistic labor through my reading



of a contemporary Chinese artist Xu Bing. My concern in this paper is with the aestheticization of the neoliberal capitalism that was manipulated and executed by the contemporary States. The primary process of the uses of bodies reflected through the artist's works manifests the ways in which people's lives are shaped and formed according to the functional and utilitarian logic in their daily life; the secondary process of the uses of bodies, what I shall address as the critical aesthetics through the political uses of the bodies, disarticulates the functional logic and at the same time exposes and critiques the capitalist logic. The primary process of the uses of the bodies by the State, the *polis*, took us to the question of the forms of life under the dictate of the political economy as discussed by Giorgio Agamben, and the question as to how and why human life, through the uses of bodies, is shaped, measured, calculated, regulated and processed into various forms of life.

In *Means without End*, Agamben wrote, "Life—in its state of exception that has now become the norm—is the naked life that in every context separates the forms of life from their cohering into a form-of-life" ("Form" 6). The Marxist scission between man and citizen, Agamben points out, had been superseded and substituted by the division between naked life and various forms of social-juridical identities, such as the voter, the worker, the journalist, the student, the HIV-positive, the transvestite, the porno star, the elderly, the parent, the woman, and so on ("Form" 6-7). Agamben suggests that we need to think the possibility of a life of power—a life that cannot be separated from its form, a life in which "the single ways, acts, and processes of living are never simply *facts* but always and above all *possibilities* of life, always and above all power"? ("Form" 3; emphasis in original) I fully agree with Agamben's proposal to think the power of life or the potential of life that would not be always already administered and distributed according to the reason of the *polis*. But, in order to highlight the controversial question related to the concept of potentiality, I will juxtapose François Jullien's formulation of the concept of *shi* (potential, inclination, tendency) that he derived from classical Chinese philosophy with the Western concept of *potential/potestas* as well as from the ancient Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi; and I will discuss the possibility of a new critical and political use of the bodies through the politics of aesthetics as this possibility presents itself in Xu's work.

## Aestheticization of Post-1989 Neoliberal Capitalism

Xu is a world-renowned contemporary artist from China. Born in Chongqing in 1955 and raised in Beijing, he went through the Cultural Revolution and spent his teenage, as all his contemporaries did, in a peasant village located in a remote mountain valley. Xu entered the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing in the 1970s and acquired his artistic skills in woodblock printing. Moving away from the social realist artist trend of his time, Xu's art was known as avant-gardist conceptual art and became famous in the late 1980s. After the Tiananmen Square Protests of 1989, because of the tightened political pressure and artistic restrictions, Xu left China and moved to the United States in 1990. His artworks such as *Book from the Sky*, *Ghosts Pounding the Wall*, *Square Word Calligraphy*, *Background Story*, *Tobacco Project* and *Phoenix Project* were exhibited all over the world. Besides numerous awards, *Art News* in the U.S. also considered Xu one of the 40 influential artists in the world in the twentieth century. Xu returned to China in 2007 and has been serving as the vice president of China Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in Beijing till now. (Wang Chia-Chi 5-6; Gao 10-15)

I want to begin by looking at Xu's *Background Story: Misty Rivers and Layered Ridges* (*Beihoude gushih: Yanjiangdiejhangtu*), an installation that was exhibited at the Taipei Fine Arts Museum in 2014 (Figure 1).



Figure 1. *Background Story: Misty Rivers and Layered Ridges*

In this installation, Xu took the scroll painting *Misty Rivers and Layered Ridges* (ca. 1604) by the late Ming great master Dong Qichang (1555-1636) of the seventeenth century, a classic collection from the National Palace Museum in Taipei, as the blueprint for his adaptation. Dong's *Misty Rivers and Layered Ridges* itself was an imitation of the painting of the same title by a Northern Song painter Wang Shen (1036-ca. 1093) of the eleventh century. The structural compositions of the landscape of the two pieces by Wang and Dong are roughly the same, while the lines and the brushes are entirely different. Likewise, in Xu's *Background Story: Misty Rivers and Layered Ridges*, we see a similar composition to that specific work of the same title by Dong. The entire installation was arranged with three large light boxes, size 520 x 2185 cm. The viewers saw on the surface of the frosted-glass-panels an echo of Dong's painting, with scattered houses and trees here and there, rolling hills and strips of water, and mist extended in the middle and stretched to the background. When walking behind the large glass boxes, however, the viewers would—perhaps to their surprise—see an assemblage of waste objects glued onto the glass, such as fishing lines, cotton balls, scraps of local newspapers, wooden sticks, dry grass, and twigs of various trees picked up from nearby areas, pieces of brick from neighborhood constructions, and so on. The local artists who collaborated with Xu said that, in order to collect these objects, they walked around Taipei city streets and campuses to pick up these discarded objects from various corners of the city. Even though the viewers of this assemblage work saw a constellation of hills, trees and houses that resembled the painting by Dong, the result of this collection process was that Xu's three-dimensional installation in fact presented the physical labor and temporal movement behind the scenes or the "forms of life." Xu achieved similar results in his exhibitions in various other cities, through the projection of light onto the two-dimensional flat space.

Xu has constructed the installation of *Background Story* Projects, starting from 2004, for 15 exhibitions, respectively in Berlin, London, Gwangju, Suzhou, New York, Massachusetts and other places. It appears to me that Xu presented his meta- aesthetics through his project of *Background Story*. On the one hand, the forms of people's life were depicted on the surface of the artwork and the primary process of the consumption of the objects and goods is concealed through the styled aestheticization, while on the other hand, in the background of the panel, the consumed and used-up objects, the remnants of people's life and the forms of death, the used-up objects, are assembled in an entangled way through the artists' body movements and linked to different

forms of past lives in the cities. These reassembled and re-configured forms of death told us different stories of the forms of life that had been experienced.



**Figure 2.** The scene behind the work *Background Story: Misty Rivers and Layered Ridges*

The meta-aesthetics presented through Xu's work offers viewers a distancing perspective from which to observe the utilitarian logic hidden behind the stylized forms of life. This perspective could also further lead us in our reading of his other artworks.



**Figure 3.** *Tobacco Project: 1st Class*

Xu's *Tobacco Project* (*Yancao jihua*) (Figure 3), for example, provided excellent illustrations of the relation between the functional uses of the bodies and the utilitarian logic behind the uses of the objects. *Tobacco Project 1999-2011* originated from Xu's visit to the tobacco factory in Durham, North Carolina, during his trip to Duke University in 1999. The Duke family in fact established the British-American Tobacco Company in Shanghai at the beginning of the twentieth century and was the first company to introduce tobacco-rolling technology to China. Over the past years, Xu has explored different aspects of the uses of tobacco and its complicated relations with Chinese societies and histories in different exhibitions, such as *Tobacco Project: Shanghai, Pipe, Little Redbook, Chinese Spirit, Tobacco Book, Backbone* and *1st Class* (Figure 3).



**Figure 4.** *Tobacco Project: Pipe*



**Figure 5.** *Tobacco Project: Little Redbook*



**Figure 6.** *Tobacco Project: Tobacco Book*



**Figure 7.** *Tobacco Project: Shanghai*

In *Tobacco Project: Shanghai* exhibited in 2004, the juxtaposition of the skyscrapers at the Bund (*Waitan*) (Figure 7) with the photos of the old tobacco factory at the harbor a century ago was a striking example of Xu's stylized and complex representation of historical and "behind the scenes" processes. The Bund was the waterfront area in central Shanghai where mansions owned by international trading companies were clustered from mid-nineteenth-century onwards, after Shanghai was forced to open itself to international trade as one of the five treaty ports. This was on top of China's having to grant Great Britain extraterritoriality and the cession of Hong Kong Island, dictated by the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842 upon the failure of the first Opium War, also named as Anglo-Chinese War, in 1839-1842. Here, then, is the symbolic historical moment when China was launched into the path of modernity. Today, in the twenty-first century, the Bund is even more crowded with the high-rise buildings of international banks and business centers. The traces of China's socialist past and its postponed economic development during the Maoist era in the middle of the twentieth century were almost entirely erased. Instead, China has caught up with the rest of the world in terms of its economic power with tremendous will and speed within the past two decades. Not only has the progress of modernity been seamlessly sutured, but China has entered center-stage as a world financial power.

What Walter Benjamin called "the aestheticization of politics," the will of the nation that shaped the landscape with bombardments and barbed wires (122-26), now is transformed in the post-1989 and post-socialist era in China into the aestheticization of neoliberal and transnational capitalism.

The project of the aestheticization of neoliberal capitalism reflects not only the alteration of the landscape with super-tall buildings, but also the modes of desire deep-rooted in the people, that is, the desire to catch up with and enjoy the materialist and economic growth as the rest of the world. *Tobacco Project 1999-2011: 1st Class*, an installation, size approximately 1500 x 600 cm, that was first exhibited in Virginia in 2011 and also exhibited in the Taipei Fine Arts Museum in 2014, tells us of these intriguing modes of desire. The shape of this piece looks like a tiger-skin rug, but is composed of over 500,000 cigarettes, with the aroma of tobacco permeating the entire space of the exhibition hall. The tiger-skin shaped contour of the *Tobacco Project: 1st Class* refers first and foremost to the trophy won through the capitalist logic, but it also indicates more fundamentally the desire of the people longing for each and every one of the pieces of the 500,000 cigarettes. Here, the logic of capitalism does not only display itself in the accumulation and expansion of capital but also in its claim of *laissez-faire* economic liberalism through free trade, open markets, economic liberalization, reduction of the government's control and enhancement of the private sectors of the economy. What is accumulated and expanded is not merely capital in the form of money, but all calculable future capital, that is, the financialization of the transnational markets and the distortion it brought to local economics, including drastic economic inequality, the damage of the farming industry and the pollution of rural environment. Xu's artwork thus presents not only his exposition but also his sharp critique of the logic and the aestheticization of neoliberal capitalism.



Figure 8. *Phoenix Project*



*Phoenix Project (Fonghuang)* (Figure 8) is another extraordinary example of Xu's critique of the effect of the post-1989 neoliberal and transnational capitalism in China. *Phoenix Project* was commissioned in 2008 to create a sculpture for the atrium of the new World Financial Center in Beijing. Earlier that year, Xu had returned to Beijing, 18 years after he left China in 1990, and been struck by the sight of the rapidly changed city and the harsh working conditions of migrant laborers at the construction site. In an interview, Xu said that "When I first visited the building site, I had a sense of shock." The poor working conditions for the migrant laborers made his skin "quiver" (Vogel). These views apparently provided a sharp contrast to the laborers' conditions in the socialist China in the mid-twentieth century, when he himself used to be one of them working in rural villages. He then gathered the migrant workers at the construction site to help him with the artwork and assembled the rusted and wasted tools used by these workers for his *Phoenix Project*—a huge sculptural work composed of two metallic birds lifted 12 feet above the ground, measuring 28 meters long and weighing 6 tons each. If we look closely at the close-up of the photographs of the sculptures, we can see objects such as tower crane hoists, rusted tire rims, steel saws and scoops, iron barrels, screwdrivers, hose tanks, girders, safety helmets, glass fragments and construction gadgets. These garbage-like objects were the necessary subsistence indispensable to the migrant laborers in their daily works and their daily lives. These migrant laborers also became attached to these metallic tools, while they themselves also have turned out to be part of the objects consumed by the rapid developmental projects and easily disposable through the production process. The elegant but horrifically gigantic figures of the mythological birds, symbolizing the rebirth of China in an ironic way, hang above the ground in the new business center, now marking the alternation of the landscape of Beijing city.

CBC in the end cancelled the commission and, after a long process of negotiation, the artwork was exhibited instead in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York, among other places in the U.S., in 2014. The displaced location of the exhibition of this sculptural Phoenix, removed from Beijing and re-installed in New York, to me, manifested the ironic turn of the capitalist move, with the huge iron birds as the embodiment of the aestheticization of the neoliberal capitalist logic and the re- birth of a new China, energized by its tremendous financial power.



## Forms of Life and the Political Economy

The double cycle of the consumption and production of objects that I mentioned previously needs further elaboration. Let us first think about the question of the primary cycle of the transformation of the consumption and production of things in life. To be more precise, my question here is why and in what ways human life is shaped, measured, calculated, regulated and processed into various compartmentalized forms of life through the apparatus of the socially functional and utilitarian uses of things, bodies and objects, and how and in what ways are human agents at the same time retroactively mass producing and conditioning an even more powerful mechanism of the uses of bodies, aided by remote forces of the global flow of capital.

What Xu demonstrates in his *Tobacco Project: Shanghai*, *Tobacco Project: 1st Class* and *The Phoenix Project* may be thought of as the forms of life that have been drawn and shaped through a process of rapid involution in post-socialist China. According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China, the number of the farmer-workers (*nongmingong*) amounted up to 268,940,000 at the highest, with a 2.4% increase rate from the previous year ("2013Nian"). In a recent study by Huang Dan, we learn that the percentage of the "new workers" is currently about 20% of the entire population of China (4). The large number of migrant workers was sucked in and dispersed along with the speedy swirl of the emerging new status of China both as the financial center, the world markets and the world factory. The construction of the high-rise buildings that occupied the urban space in Beijing, Shanghai, Shenzhen and other major cities, and the heavy traffics of commercial, informational and financial activities, not only attracted but also up-rooted the farmer-workers from their hometowns. These internal migrant farmer-workers mostly could no longer go back to their former ways of life because they had sold up their farmlands and because they prefer higher salaries that they could earn through the construction projects in the big cities, despite the fact that they could never get settled, might not have regular income, could only inhabit in a tiny room with the entire family, and would always be marginalized in the cities. They could not even obtain labor contracts. As a result, they were forced to move from one construction site to another construction site. (Wang Hui "Gaizhi," "Woyou"; Lyu; Pun and Chan; Pun and Lu).

These displaced bodies are literally utilized in accordance with the huge increase of the demand for laborers because of the rapid growth of

the infrastructure of transnational entrepreneurial networks and financial centers in China. These forms of life, caught up by the momentum of the global neoliberal flow of capital, have also been embodied by the compartmentalization of urban space—that is, the segregation of high-rise skyscrapers, on the one hand, and the ghetto areas of the laborers' villages, on the other, which is another demonstration of the aestheticization of the post-1989 neoliberal capitalist logic in China.

How do we consider the life of these male-utilized migrant laborers? Why do they voluntarily accept or, in fact, desire such forms of life? They come to big cities to work at randomly chosen construction sites, displaced and dispersed in urban ghettos, with no contracts and no protection from the law. They literally become the bare life in the camp, as described by Agamben in his *Homo Sacer*, “a form of life that is wholly exhausted in bare life and a *bios* that is only its own *zoē*” (Agamben, *Homo* 188). These workers are no longer the farmers and laborers that co-habited in the people's communes who shared the common beliefs and common life experiences, working for the common goal, but are isolated individuals who had been cut off from their hometowns and inserted into various laborer's villages in the margins of the big cities. We seem to see various metamorphoses of the camp, the hidden matrix of the bio-politics that function as an apparatus of *dislocating localization*. Or as Agamben puts it: “The political system no longer orders forms of life and juridical norms in a determinate space; rather, it contains within itself a *dislocating localization* that exceeds it and in which virtually every form of life and every norm can be captured” (Agamben, “Form” 44).

The forms of life that are turned into forms of death are the stakes Agamben addressed in his *Homo Sacer* projects. The techniques of the management of human life includes everything from his birth to his death, the entry and exit of the territory, the crossing of the borders, preventive quarantine, protective custodies, eugenics, citizenships and so on. As Michel Foucault and Agamben have pointed out, the motor that triggers the apparatus of bio-politics is therefore no longer only the nexus connecting the juridical rule with the techniques of subjectivation, but the power of political economy at the center.

Political economy here apparently does not refer to a system of rules or a science of knowledge, but to a paradigm that was associated with administrative activities, including management, arrangement, *dispositif*, organization and execution of the order of things in the household, as

what *oikos-nomia* suggests (Agamben, *Kingdom* 17-18). *Oikos* designates private household space while *polis* refers to the public domain, and therefore *oikos-nomia* should mean the arrangement of household affairs. But the line between the *oikos* and *polis* is a tricky question. Carl Schmitt drawing on Erich Przywara's etymological studies, pointed out that in the Western context of *pneumatic logos*, *oikos* refers to the house of God. From the beginning of the patriarchal society, *oikos-nomia* is in the realm of *polis* and is essentially political economy (Schmitt 336-45). To this, Agamben adds the notion that economic theology, conceived as an "immanent ordering" of both divine and human life, was the roots for modern bio-politics. The current triumph of economy and government over every aspect of social life is due to this tradition of economic theology (Agamben, *Kingdom* 1). Agamben's research shows that, in the writings of Philo of Alexandria, the *oikia* was defined as "a *polis* on a small and contracted scale" and economy as "a contracted . . . *politeia*," while the *polis* was defined as "a large house [*oikos megas*]," and politics as "a [common] economy [*koinē tis oikonomia*]." Community therefore was referred to as "the house of God" (*oikos theou*) and the messianic community was also conceived of in the mode of *oikonomia*. (*Kingdom* 24-25; emphasis in original) The question here then is: what are the "things" and according to what orders are they arranged, administered and distributed in the *oikos/polis* now that *oikos* and *polis* are inter-penetrated and overlaid with one another?

In the practice of modern bio-politics, not only natural resources such as agricultural, fishery, mining, forestry, industrial and commercial products are to be managed, reproduced and circulated, but also human physical, intellectual and moral powers are to be controlled, guided and monitored so that they can be part of the reproduction machine. The power of human life turns out to be the productive forces of the State. The forms of human life, consequently, are shaped and engineered according to the rational and utilitarian goals of the State and have turned out to be the bodies and appendixes that are annexed to the social productive apparatus, as can be seen in the figures of the migrant workers at the construction sites that Xu reflected and critiqued through his artworks.

What is life, or the power of life, then is the question for us to consider.

## The Power of Life, the Manipulation of Form, or the Chinese Way?

Is life merely the productive forces to be shaped and utilized by the State? Are the powers of life inevitably managed and manipulated by the social apparatus in terms of the visible and actual labor force? How do we conceive of the potential of life, the generic power of life that is to remain as constantly active and not as readily actualized into fixated forms?

Self-consciously distancing himself from the Western philosophical mode, François Jullien, in *The Propensity of Things: Toward a History of Efficacy in China* (*La propension des choses: Pour une histoire de l'efficacité en Chine*), offers an interpretation of the potential of things, based on his readings of the classical Chinese philosophical concept of “*shi*”. Jullien’s notion of “*shi*” is particularly inspired by the writings Sunzi on military strategy that stresses the need to minimize armed engagement and seek victory at the earliest stage. According to Sunzi, as Jullien explains, the leader of the army needs to know how to intervene “when dispositions [*shi*] and maneuvers are still depending on our own initiatives and to be adjusted at will.” The force of the development of the combat is derived from the correlation of all factors involved in the situation. Sunzi wrote: “For a man who is expert at using his troops, this potential born of disposition [*shi*] may be likened to making round stones roll down from the highest summit” (qtd. in Jullien, *Propensity* 27-29).

Jullien elaborated on the logic of “*shi*” which extends in different aspects of life and considers reality as “a process of transformation” with the inherent tendency, inclination and propensity. The propensities of things lie within every element in reality and in the very “configuration or disposition of things.” In politics, Jullien pointed out, we see the potential born of “hierarchical disposition”; in calligraphy, painting and literature, we see the force working through the form of a character in “the tension emanating from the disposition of things”; in the process of history, we see “the tendencies resulting from particular situations in history and the propensity that governs the overall process.” (*Propensity* 14)

The notion of “*shi*” is best exemplified through Jullien’s illustrations of the Chinese aesthetics of calligraphies and paintings. In the study of calligraphy, *shi* is extremely important. There is potential force or *shi* inherent within the forms of the configuration and the strokes of the ideograms. The strategic positioning of the elements on the paper, as the troops on the battlefield, creates the potential (*shi*) that would run through the entire sphere. Jullien

explained that *shi* could be defined as the *force* that runs through the *form* of the written character and animates it aesthetically: “a particular gesture is converted into a form, just as a particular form is equally converted into a gesture. In this schema the figure produced and the movement producing it are equivalent; one can speak of the *shi* of the brush that delineates the ideogram just as one speaks of the *shi* of the ideogram that it traces” (*Propensity* 76). Jullien further stressed that the function of *shi* from stroke to stroke is evaluated through its correlation with the totality of the work: the factors within the overall sphere operate and interact with one another not only through networks of affinities but also through contrast in a series of correlated polarities and tensions (*Propensity* 77-78).

“*Shi*,” then, is employed in the description of the effects of the tension and suspension of these correlated elements and the tendencies of the movements. In his discussion of the dynamism of *shi* in Chinese landscape paintings, Jullien reveals to us how the Chinese would notice the narrow crest of rock creating a “dynamic configuration” (*shi*) through its line “snaking and weaving like a dragon” (*wanshanrulong*). The tension and suspension between the lines and forms depends on the correlation and composition of the entire scope, the rise and fall of the pinnacles and flanks of the mountains, the trail of clouds or mist circulating along the stretches and folds of the mountains, the woods, waterfalls, rivers, huts, villages and figures here and there on the canvas (Jullien, *Propensity* 79-82).

Jullien also points out that it is crucial to conceive of *shi* in its “totality” because the reality of things “only exists—and thus only manifests itself—in a totality, through the force of propensity that links its various elements as a whole” (*Propensity* 99). This imperative need for *shi*, according to Jullien, merges with the need for the unity of composition that is seen as a source of dynamism. Jullien wrote: “even the bridges and hamlets, towers and belvederes, boats and carriages, people and their houses, at times shown clearly, at times hidden, should from the beginning be determined by this general order” (*Propensity* 100).

Here, a question arises: following Jullien’s analysis of the composition of the elements in their totality and unity on the canvas, every part within the canvas would have been determined by the overall structure of the composition. If we judge only on the level of the surface composition, are we able to tell the difference of Dong’s painting from the work of Wang Shen of the same title, or that of Xu from Dong’s work of the same title?

The emphasis on the general order that determines the totality of the situation is further discussed in his *Traité de l'efficacité*. Jullien explains there that, for the Chinese, the form (*xing*) and the potential (*shi*) are coupled concepts. On the one hand, there is the situation or the configuration (the form) of the actualized power relation that takes shape before our eyes; on the other hand, there is the propensity of things that is implicated in this situation. We are not merely driven by the disposition of things within this situation; we can also manipulate the order of things so that it can turn out to be beneficial to us (Jullien, *Traité* 37-38). Jullien stressed that the Chinese emperor knew the art of governing by relying on the efficacy of the apparatus in the position and let the totality of a situation unfold its inherent inclination. As long as the emperor made the apparatus of the position function, his people would automatically submit to the position. (Jullien, *Traité* 57)

In order to further explicate the Chinese wisdom of absolute immanent governmentality, Jullien interpreted the concept of “the potential of the situation” (*jizhishi*) as the initial moment of conception, as embryonic primal point, the point that is far antecedent to the happening of the event (Jullien, *Traité* 109-10).

Jullien repetitively stressed that the Chinese ruler knows how to manipulate the situation in the very beginning, make it implicated with the desired tendencies and let the transformation take place on its own (*shouhandaiierzihua*).

This immanent “pure dispositif” could accomplish the development of things by not doing anything, *sans agir* (*wuwei*), and leave the rest to the inclination of things, *laisser advenir l'effet* (*renqizicheng*) (Jullien, *Traité* 143). Jullien writes: this “act-without-acting” is a “laisser faire (laisser-faire, laisser-passé),” and this doing nothing is not really nothing because this “letting” is an active act (*ce laisser est actif*) (Jullien, *Traité* 147).

The active and strategic “non-act,” for Jullien, had inspired the Chinese tradition of dictatorship and achieved the apparatus of immanent submission. The apparatus of power functions in the way that the ruler does not need to judge because the punishments and retributions are automatic. There is no need for surveillance because there's already a system of denouncement. When this regime is perfectly assimilated, there's also no need for chastisement because the desire or repulsion is already internalized and each one would spontaneously respect the law that has been imposed upon him. There will be no grudge of the conscience and no waste of efforts.

Everything will be smoothly processed. The imperceptible manipulation could result in automatically and spontaneously subjectivated docile bodies. (Jullien, *Traité* 156) What is striking in Jullien's argument is that, bringing together the dynamism of *shi* that he observed in Chinese military strategies, calligraphy, paintings, literature and discourse of geomancy, Jullien arrived at his conclusion about the Chinese ways of governmentality. In the "Preface" to *The Propensity of Things*, Jullien wrote: the art and wisdom in "exploiting the propensity emanating from that particular configuration of reality to the maximum effect," that is, "the notion of efficacy" (15). Jullien stressed that, from ancient times, the Chinese knew perfectly well the techniques of governmentality through the manipulation of *shi* so that the entire mechanism might function automatically and that the manipulator is inconspicuous. The people are not forced to obey, but would spontaneously follow the dictate of the emperor (Jullien, *Propensity* 60). According to this area of Chinese thought, everything is implicated by tendencies and therefore is ineluctable. The sequence of changes stems entirely from the power relations inherent in the initial situation and thereby constitutes "a closed system" (*Propensity* 221). In the concluding section, Jullien again stresses that the necessary evolving process is already implicated within the system and its variation through alternation. Conforming and adapting to the propensity of things—and not going against it—is, Jullien suggests, the wisdom and strategy particularly demonstrated by the Chinese (*Propensity* 262-63). As he more baldly states the matter: "It is therefore hardly surprising that Chinese thought is so conformist. It does not seek to distance itself from the 'world,' does not question reality, is not even surprised by it." There is no need for myth to save reality from absurdity and to confer meaning on it. There are only *rites* to regulate behavior on the reality level (*Propensity* 264).

In Jullien's elaborations, through his employment of the concepts of apparatus, *dispositif*, *régime* and *efficacité*, we see an immanent system of total manipulation and conformity within the Chinese culture. According to Jullien, Chinese people are used to conform, to obey and to adapt to the propensities of the situation to the extent that all human activities and tendencies are implicated and manipulated in the very beginning of the total scheme and therefore has paved the path for a perfect scheme of governmentality. The propensities of things are determined in the configuration of the larger situation, and even the potential power of each and everyone in the scheme has been implicated, measured, calculated and prescribed in the first place.

We cannot but propose our doubts: isn't Jullien's interpretation of the active "non-act" (*sans agir*) and "letting it be" (*laisser advenir l'effet*) already imbedded in the logic of neoliberal *laissez-faire*, meaning that all is pre-determined in the configuration of the form according to the intended rationality of utility and efficacy?

We need to reverse the question and start all over from the very beginning. Can we think the power of life through the configuration and re-configuration of the use of things? Can we envision a life that can be considered, as Agamben suggested, as a life of power?

Or, as what this paper tries to address: can we propose a different understanding of the power of form that can be achieved through art and thought through the political uses of the bodies and the forms? How do we think, for example, the hidden potential power of life beyond the dimension of the visible assemblage of the objects and bodies? How do we conceive the alter-dimensions of the objects and bodies that are related to the physical movements and life processes, be it the artist, the thinker, and each and everyone among us, beyond the form that he presents in front of our eyes, as what we can see in the artworks through the artistic labors?

### **Sovereign Thought and Sovereign Form: The Political Uses of the Bodies in Life**

In discussing the concept of power (potential) in Baruch Spinoza's writings, Antonio Negri pointed out that power does not merely refer to the "intensive relevance" of the self-foundation of being, but also to the "extensive relevance" in terms of the articulation of the various levels of reality. Articulation always is "a possibility" (51). The generic motor of being is what concerns Negri, and he differentiated *potentia* from *potestas* in his discussion of power: "*Potentia* as the dynamic and constitutive inherence of the single in the multiplicity, of mind in the body, of freedom in necessity—power against Power—where *potestas* is presented as the subordination of the multiplicity, of the mind, of freedom, and of *potentia*" (190-91; emphasis in original). Negri stressed that the Spinozian mechanism denies any possibility of a conception of the world that is not represented as a singular, flat, and superficial emergence of being. Within the totality of events, "each is absolute in itself." The points on which constitutive thought is developed are those that result "from the critical process: points, instances, events that . . . are



submitted once again to the tension, the power of the totality of being” (212). The reconstruction of the world is the very process of “the continual physical composition and recomposition of things” (Negri 212-23).

Negri’s emphasis on the constitutive power of each “point” within the totality of event, and the continual composition and re-composition of things, is important for us to consider. Following this line of thought, Jullien’s depiction of the “first point” as the embryonic moment that implicates and determines the propensity and inclination of the totality of the situation would not be possible. From one point to the other point, there are all the possibilities.

But, to Agamben, Negri’s proposal of the constituent power and the continuing act of free choice, as the re-composition of the multitude, cannot solve the question that every sovereign act is in the first place an act of original ban and exclusion (Agamben, *Homo* 47). In order to think a life of power that is not an expansion of limitless sovereign power, and a life that is not separated from itself by the grasp of the law and the ban, Agamben suggested, in his recent writing *The Highest Poverty*, we need to take a step further and to think a different “theory of use.” The question raised by Agamben in this study, I think, is revealing for our discussion here. Agamben wrote:

How can use—that is, a relation to the world insofar as it is inappropriate—be translated into an ethos and a form of life? And what ontology and which ethics would correspond to a life that, in use, is constituted as inseparable from its form? The attempt to respond to these questions will necessarily demand a confrontation with the operative ontological paradigm into whose mold liturgy, by means of a secular process has ended up forcing the ethics and politics of the West. (*Poverty* 144-45)

The task to expose and to critique “the operative and governmental ontology” hidden behind various disguises is essential for Agamben in order to resist the appropriation of life and bodies as properties according to the given utilitarian functions.

This observation is consistent with Agamben’s works in the past with regards to his inquiries into the separation and appropriation of things and lives by law. In his dialogue with Martin Heidegger (1995) in *The Open: Man and Animal*, Agamben proposed to make the anthropological machine

inoperative so that the animality of living being could be disinhibited and a new path and a new space could be opened (Agamben, *Open* 79-80). For Agamben, the task of maintaining the sovereignty of life is one of disarticulating the link constituted by the law and restoring the live-ability of every life in itself. Religion for Agamben exercised the first power of separation, and to profane means to challenge the line of separation and to restore life that is not separated from its form. In this sense, the “pure use” of things means that the use takes place in relations, while the concept of property and ownership makes the thing attached to juridical rights instead of relations. Agamben wrote: “The creation of a new use is possible only by deactivating an old use, rendering it inoperative” (Agamben, *Profanations* 86). To deactivate an old use, to make it inoperative and to create a new use, it requires the power of thought. The power of life, for Agamben, is the power of thought as the nexus that can constitute the forms of life “in an inseparable context as form-of-life.” Agamben explained that it is not the individual exercise of an organ or of a psychic faculty, but rather “an experience, an *experimentum* that has as its object the potential character of life and of human intelligence” (Agamben, “Form” 9).

Agamben’s proposal to deactivate the old use and create a new use of things resonates with the ancient Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi’s (369 BC-286 BC) discussion of the use of things in his *Qiwulun* (*On the Equality of All Things*).

Zhuangzi said that a thing is called by its name through the constant application of the name to it, and the thing is therefore differentiated by its name and becomes partially recognized. But everything has its inherent character and capability, and is not limited by the name attached to it. If we can give up the views we have acquired by learning, and use the things as they are, the use then is in mutual access (*yongyezhe tongye*). It is so-called Dao, that is, the ways of things. To Zhuangzi, to restore the things from the confinement of their names is to access them as they are, just like to make the music of the nature sound their own notes (*chuiwanbutong, shiqiziyi*). This self-same-ness, *ziji*, is to denounce the confinement of the nominal system, to acknowledge the mutual implication of self and other (*bishifangsheng*), and to allow one’s constant appearing and disappearing to manifest itself (*fangshengfangsi, fangsifangsheng*) (Guo 50, 66, 69-70). According to the commentator Guo Xiang (Ca. 252-312) of the third century, *ziji* means to allow everything to follow its own natural path (*zijierran*), and not

to be enslaved by the things according to one's will (*feiyiwushicongji*) (Guo 50). Zhang Taiyan (1869-1936) further interpreted this selfsame-ness, freed from the nominal confinement, as *ālāya* or the eighth consciousness, which is explained as "thusness" or "suchness" (*Zhenru, Tathata*), that is, one who has arrived at suchness and every moment of this suchness would be different from the other moments (Zhang 296).

In Zhuangzi, we see a relation to the world in the use of things. These relations could easily be confined by our customary acquisition and the pre-given nominal system. When the symbolic law separates things and bodies according to subjective utilities and functions, the forms of people's life would also be transformed into functional and fragmentary bodies. Zhuangzi's proposal to receive new bodies in a vacuous and inoperative position (*xuerdaiwu*) is a politics of dialectic negativity to constantly work on the unbinding of the fixated images and ideas bound by the nominal system, and to maintain the dynamic and dialectic flow of opening and closing of oneself as the rise and fall of ideas in our encounter with different bodies. Zhuangzi said, to face the others as they are, one needs to experience and listen to them not with his ear (*tingzhiyier*), nor with his mind (*tingzhiyixin*), but with his *qi* (*tingzhiyiqi*) (Guo 147). For Zhuangzi, it requires *qi* to access the other bodies, to disentangle the logic of separation and to restore all things to their *thusness*, that is, to dis-articulate the things from the names that they are attached to.

What is *Qi*? *Qi* is not any physical or conceptual capacity, but the flow and the movement which uphold and support life, that is, the liveliness of life itself in its totality. In this sense, *qi* is nothing else but life itself.

The experience or the experiment that Agamben proposes to conceive a "form- of-life" that is not separated from life itself and to bring things back to pure use, and the politics of negativity proposed by Zhuangzi to clear away the nominal confinement and to use things as they are, to access the others with one's *qi* [life], can give us a new perspective to the question of the power of form that is not separated from life.

### **The Political Uses of Bodies and the Power of Form**

Jullien's problem is that he places too much emphasis on the manipulatable closed system. For him, the potential of things is primarily implicated at the first point, the initial embryonic moment, and even the non-act would work

with full efficacy to the extent that every subject would naturally submit to the manipulation of the design of the entire scheme. The part is therefore fundamentally premeditated and determined by the totality of things.

If we read the visible forms in Xu Bing's works through Jullien's analysis of the configurations within the totality of the frame, we would see only misty rivers and layered ridges on the surface of the panel, consumable objects produced through the tobacco industry, and the beautiful phoenix from ancient Chinese mythology. It would be a flat two-dimensional space, and we could not see the "background stories" Xu wanted to draw our attention to. The composition of each element is organically related, but is also initially determined.

The power of the form, however, lies in the dynamic linking force of the composite parts to their background. The traces on each and every one of the objects told us all the background stories. The consumed objects, the tobacco, the rusted tire rims, steel saws and scoops, iron barrels, screwdrivers and safety helmets all demonstrated the primary cycle of use and exposed the forms of life shaped and driven by the logic of development. The workers migrated from rural places to big cities, working in different construction sites. The marginalized inhabitants in the cities were further marginalized and put into different ghettos. The workers lost their status as respected laborers in the socialist China fifty years ago, and became utterly homeless. The primary process of the functional and utilitarian uses of the bodies, through the technique of political economy, have formed people's life into fragmentary forms of life in order to not only to better govern them, but to have them produce better according to the interest of the *polis*.

Even though the forms of all things appear to our eyes in their two-dimensional modes, it is in fact interwoven with multiple physical trajectories, temporal processes and manual labors, combined with layers of local and global histories, as in a topological space. Through his political uses of the bodies, Xu did not only dis-articulate and deactivate the functional uses of the bodies, as suggested differently by Agamben and by Zhuangzi, but further exposed the logic of the neoliberal capitalist development that is linked with the bodies and is rapidly altering the Chinese society. It is therefore important to note at this point that the artistic and political uses of the bodies, as what we see in Xu Bing's artistic labor, besides exposing the law of separation and putting the bodies into new use, also displayed at the same time how the various forms of life were linked with these re-assembled bodies, the used-up

objects as forms of death, and thus all the ironies and paradoxes constituted through the historical processes were presented in the form. Here, in the form of the artwork, and the forms of death, we see a newly forged force of critical thought.

The power of form in Xu's works, therefore, does not lie in the bodies and objects arranged within the context, but in the interwoven force of thoughts. The secondary process of the aestheticization, that is, the politics of aesthetics, is the power of thought that demonstrates itself through the political uses of the bodies and the artistic labor, each time a critical experiment, and each time a new use of the bodies that exposes the gap between the bodies and their lives, and thereby opening up a new space of critical thought, with new understandings and new experiences.

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TRUPA DHE GJESTE

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DES CORPS ET DES GESTES

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BODIES AND GESTURES





## Que veulent les gestes politiques ?

PHILIPPE ROY

Avant d'aborder de plein fouet le problème dont j'aimerais m'entretenir, celui qui consiste à se demander ce que veulent les gestes politiques, je voudrais revenir sur ce terme de geste, pour présenter succinctement comment je l'emploie en politique. On peut tout d'abord le concevoir dans le registre du pouvoir et le renvoyer à la conduite des conduites tel que Foucault l'a caractérisé. Cette définition foucaldienne convient bien à la gouvernementalité. Un gouvernement oriente et met en forme nos conduites. Nos conduites peuvent être assimilées à des gestes, en tant que ceux-ci font des choses avec *telle ou telle manière*. Prenons un geste non politique. Le geste de verser un café fait quelque chose avec une certaine manière. Il faut *se conduire* d'une certaine façon. Ici je n'utilise pas le verbe « conduire » mais plus précisément « *se conduire* ». Ceci met l'accent sur la subjectivation d'un geste, le geste conditionne un certain « soi ». Le soi de mes manières d'être, de mes gestes. Je suis mes gestes et ceci aux deux sens des verbes « suivre » et « être ».

Cependant Foucault parle de *conduire* les conduites. Peut-on séparer le « conduire » des conduites qu'il conduit ? Prenons l'analogie canonique du pouvoir pastoral qu'est celle du berger avec ses brebis. Les brebis sont conduites par le berger sans que le « conduire » du berger soit séparable des conduites des brebis. Ou du moins cette séparation est abstraite, je peux voir d'un côté les gestes du berger et de l'autre les gestes des brebis, c'est une distinction de raison et non réelle car les gestes des brebis sont en relation avec les gestes du berger. Et cette relation n'est pas extérieure aux deux

termes, elle est constituante des gestes des brebis et du berger. D'où l'intérêt de parler en termes de gestes. Car parler de conduire des conduites donne trop l'impression d'une séparation entre le « conduire » et les conduites, ceci allant contre la volonté de Foucault lui-même qui tient à poser une relation de pouvoir et non une relation entre un pouvoir qui serait dans les mains du berger et un matériau sur lequel il s'effectuerait (ici les brebis). Or, si on fait le choix des gestes, cette relation entre des gestes devient plus facilement pensable, je vais le montrer. Bien plus, on va voir que ceci nous permet de comprendre pourquoi un geste nous fait vouloir quelque chose, problème qui m'occupe ici. Avant de revenir aux gestes politiques, je vais m'attarder un peu sur des gestes simples.

Soit donc un geste ordinaire : le simple geste d'allumer un briquet. Le geste n'est pas seulement celui d'actionner la molette avec le pouce. Il y a aussi une autre action : celle de tenir le briquet. Mais aussi des sensations (le toucher, la bonne pression sur la mollette, la vue de la flamme). Si je décide d'appeler « acte » chacune des actions et leurs perceptions associées, on peut donc dire ici que l'effectuation du geste suppose deux actes corrélés. Mais ce geste peut servir à faire un autre geste : celui d'allumer ma cigarette. Dans ce cas je dirais alors qu'il lui est *subordonné*, le geste d'allumer un briquet devient un des *actes* du geste d'allumer ma cigarette, l'autre étant celui de tenir ma cigarette. Étant subordonné à ce geste d'allumer ma cigarette, il varie pour être adapté à ce geste. Le geste qui, tout seul était libre, est maintenant subordonné à un autre. Mais remarquons que le geste libre d'allumer un briquet se subordonnait lui aussi deux autres gestes, devenus ses actes, tenir le briquet et actionner la molette, qui pourraient très bien être des gestes libres eux-aussi, en étant libérés de leur subordination au geste d'allumer un briquet.

Quelle est la relation qui lie les gestes de tenir un briquet et d'actionner la molette ? Eh bien c'est donc un autre geste : celui d'allumer le briquet. Quelle est la relation qui lie le geste d'allumer mon briquet et celui de tenir ma cigarette ? C'est aussi un autre geste : celui d'allumer ma cigarette. La relation entre gestes est un geste immanent à ceux qu'il relie. Je réponds donc au problème que je posais plus haut. Ne croyons pas que ce geste relationnel, mis en valeur dans cette situation, n'est pas adéquat pour penser la politique car il n'y aurait qu'une personne en jeu alors que la politique en implique plusieurs. Car le geste d'allumer une cigarette peut très bien concerner deux personnes, j'allume la cigarette de quelqu'un d'autre, c'est un geste collectif. Certes, ce n'est ici que le collectif le plus minimal : deux personnes, mais on imagine sans

difficulté un geste collectif à plus de deux personnes. Pensez à une danse, au geste d'un sport collectif, à un geste technique de travail, une émeute et aussi à mon geste pastoral du berger et des brebis. Ceci me ramène alors à ce cas. La relation immanente aux gestes du berger et des brebis est donc un geste : le geste pastoral. Si bien que le berger n'est pas vraiment celui qui conduit, car ses gestes sont aussi subordonnés au geste pastoral, il ne fait pas ce qu'il veut mais il veut ce que veut le geste pastoral. Il y aurait donc une volonté impersonnelle (comme ici celle du geste pastoral), sans sujet, qui serait attribuable aux gestes. Bien plus, chaque geste aurait sa volonté propre. Mais puisque ce n'est pas celle d'un sujet, il n'y a pas une faculté générale appelée « volonté ». Employons plutôt le terme de « volition », chaque geste possède donc sa volition. Cette volition exprime une puissance gestuelle, sa dynamique, son impulsivité. On a tort de penser que c'est notre volonté qui conditionne la puissance motrice d'un geste (c'est parce que je voudrais, que le geste acquerrait une effectivité). C'est le geste qui me fait vouloir, qui me subjective et qui me pousse alors à dire : « je veux », sans conscience de cette cause gestuelle qui me détermine (On retrouve ici la critique du libre-arbitre de Spinoza).

Le problème de ce que veulent les gestes politiques se posera donc sous cette condition. Le berger veut car le geste veut (volition). Mais il faut envisager un autre aspect de ce qu'implique « vouloir ». Car j'écrivais aussi que le berger veut *ce que* veut le geste. Si vous demandez au berger *ce* qu'il veut, il vous dira sans problème : je veux emmener les brebis à tel endroit en les faisant passer par tel autre, les protéger contre tels dangers etc. Le pasteur, pour en revenir au champ plus explicitement politique, vous dira même qu'il a en vue un objectif plus global, le salut de l'âme des individus ou alors pour le geste pastoral biopolitique, il évoquera la santé ou pour un geste de gouvernementalité néolibérale on évoquera par exemple l'objectif qu'est la croissance. Il y a donc des objets, des buts *voulus*, ce vers quoi doivent être tournés les regards, les pensées. Or, il importe de souligner qu'ils s'introduisent chez ceux dont les gestes sont subordonnés à un autre geste. Je reprends mon exemple du briquet. Si j'allume simplement mon briquet il n'y a pas encore d'objectif sinon de vouloir le geste pour lui-même. Si on me demande pourquoi j'allume mon briquet, eh bien je dirais que c'est parce que j'ai envie de l'allumer. Mais voici quelqu'un qui arrive et qui me demande du feu. Cette fois-ci s'introduisent des objectifs : j'allume mon briquet en l'approchant de la cigarette de la personne, mon regard est tourné vers sa cigarette, vers le rapport de celle-ci à la flamme, vers la manière dont la personne tient sa cigarette etc. Bref, les objectifs, les buts, les finalités

pour un geste n'apparaissent que lorsqu'il est subordonné à un autre. Il faut alors soutenir la chose capitale suivante : *le geste à l'horizon, celui qui n'est pas subordonné à un autre geste, celui qui nous fait vouloir, ne veut rien puisqu'il n'est pas subordonné, il ne veut rien sinon lui-même. Il veut persévérer dans son être.*

Le geste d'allumer la cigarette me fait vouloir, mon geste subordonné d'allumer le briquet devient un moyen en vue d'une fin, en vue d'objectifs, mais que veut le geste d'allumer la cigarette ? On dira qu'il est lui aussi un moyen en vue d'une fin qui est celle de fumer. On remonte donc dans la chaîne des subordinations. Mais le geste de fumer que veut-il ? Ne se veut-il pas lui-même ? Et ceci à travers son fumeur, subjectivé par le geste ? N'y a-t-il pas un désir du geste au deux sens du génitif, geste qui désire et qui est désiré ? Désir qui constitue donc une auto-affection. De même, le geste pastoral ne se veut-il pas lui-même à travers ceux qu'il subjective ? Ou le geste de souveraineté ne se veut-il pas lui-même à travers son roi et ses sujets qui ont les yeux rivés sur ses faits et gestes ? Et que voulons-nous dire quand nous disons de quelqu'un qu'il veut prendre le pouvoir ? Il ne veut pas prendre le pouvoir pour autre chose que le prendre, il veut exister par le geste du pouvoir, être subjectivé par lui, désir du geste.

On a donc deux registres de la volonté, volonté du geste pour lui-même, le geste se veut lui-même, sans que le geste soit un sujet. C'est plutôt le désir du geste, l'auto-affection du geste. Il veut persévérer dans son être ou mieux, pour éviter encore toute idée de sujet constituant, *il y a persévérance dans son être.* C'est le geste directeur. Le deuxième registre est celui des fins, des finalités, le geste directeur nous fait vouloir, par d'autres gestes, des buts, des objectifs, ceci étant très prononcé pour le geste de gouvernementalité. Le geste directeur oriente nos perceptions, nos actions, nos pensées, il nous fait adopter ses affects-valeurs, c'est-à-dire ce qui est bon ou mauvais pour lui pour s'effectuer (par exemple ses ennemis pour le geste de souveraineté). Mais pas de deuxième registre sans le premier, ce n'est pas le geste directeur qui est au service de buts, d'objectifs, c'est juste le contraire, *ce sont les buts qui sont au service du geste directeur qui se veut lui-même par ces buts.* C'est le geste de fumer qui se veut lui-même par ce but que j'ai d'allumer ma cigarette, il est virtuellement déjà là, perçu implicitement dans ce geste.

Je crois que l'on peut se donner une idée en politique de cette secondarité du but par rapport au geste politique directeur lorsqu'on a une impression d'absurdité, de vacuité des buts, des objectifs que l'on sert. Par exemple, dans le cadre d'un geste de biopouvoir lorsque l'on se demande mais pourquoi

faudrait-il que je m'occupe à ce point de cet objectif qu'est la santé comme durée de vie ? ou dans le cadre d'un geste de gouvernementalité néolibérale, mais pourquoi faut-il avoir les yeux rivé sur cet objectif qu'est la croissance ? etc. Ce qu'un geste nous pousse à prendre comme buts, comme objectifs de nos gestes subordonnés, qui semblent se dire de la modalité du nécessaire, se retournent alors en ce qu'il y a de plus contingent. Et c'est la grande crainte de ceux qui défendent un geste, par exemple des gouvernants, que d'entendre les gouvernés commencer à dire : mais à quoi bon la durée de vie, à quoi bon la croissance, à quoi bon travailler etc. C'est donc plus le geste que les buts qui est défendu, ce pourquoi toute discussion rationnelle sur les buts est souvent vaine. On le voit bien avec l'aéroport de Notre-Dame-des-Landes, ce but dépasse toute rationalité concernant l'intérêt de cet aéroport (trafic aérien, écologique etc.). Les régimes discursifs propres à un geste ont aussi pour fonction de le défendre et non de le justifier.

Cette désolidarisation d'un geste, cette défection, est une grande crainte pour les défenseurs du geste car pour que celui-ci arrive il nécessite que gouvernant et gouvernés le fassent arriver ensemble en tant que geste collectif. Ce pourquoi les gouvernés peuvent opposer des gestes de résistance à l'arrivée du geste. Leur geste est le geste d'une autre relation aux gestes des gouvernants que celle du geste gouvernemental. Il y a plein de gestes *intergestuels* de résistance. Je peux *affronter* ceux qui sont porteurs du geste auquel je m'oppose, je peux aussi *interrompre* leur geste (grève), je peux *l'enrayer*, le *fuir*, je peux *me braquer*, je peux *destituer*, etc. Il nous revient de faire l'analyse dans chaque situation, à chaque époque politique, des gestes intergestuels qui leur sont propres. On notera cependant que ces gestes supposent sûrement comme préalable un geste de refus. Ce geste est particulier car il n'implique pas d'acte, il se joue au seul niveau affectif en pensée, je m'oppose à un geste que j'imagine. Les gestes peuvent donc aussi n'avoir lieu qu'en pensée, bien plus certaines pensées supposent des gestes. N'est-ce pas d'ailleurs ce que je fais depuis le début de ce texte, les gestes dont je parle ne sont pas que corporels, nous les jouons en pensée comme leur relation gestuelle. Ils nous permettent même de saisir le sens de différentes orientations politiques (souveraineté, gouvernementalité etc.).

J'en profite pour souligner autre chose. En parlant de *faire arriver* un geste, j'insinue qu'il y a une dimension événementielle dans la gestualité. Un geste est geste-événement, pas nécessairement des événements remarquables, la répétition de gestes ordinaires supposent aussi à chaque fois que je

fasse arriver tel geste dans telle situation, à tel moment. Ceci vient donc appuyer l'hypothèse d'une fondamentale *impersonnalité* des gestes car se disant aussi d'événements qui nous arrivent. Nous sommes les jouets de gestes, des somnambules permanents, et ceci dans tous nos gestes. Et c'est bien cette impersonnalité des gestes qui fait que les gestes circulent. Nous nous imitons inconsciemment. Il y a une contagion gestuelle. Et des mêmes gestes peuvent s'effectuer à différentes échelles. Par exemple des auteurs tel que Arendt, Foucault, Agamben ont beaucoup insisté sur le fait que le geste gouvernemental était aussi le geste du foyer domestique, de même que la souveraineté peut avoir lieu en famille comme à l'échelle d'un pays. On adhère donc à des gestes politiques d'Etat parce qu'ils sont déjà ceux de nos gestes familiers, sociaux. Le néolibéralisme dit vrai quand il met l'accent sur le fait que la famille est comme une petite entreprise. Les types d'objectifs que se donne un gouvernement néolibéral ne sont pas sans être isomorphes à ceux des familles, et c'est ainsi que le geste perdure. Le geste gouvernemental est colonisateur à toutes les échelles.

J'aborde maintenant la deuxième partie de cette réflexion qui est la face plus lumineuse de la gestualité après avoir exposé jusqu'à présent plutôt sa face sombre. N'y a-t-il pas en effet un autre régime gestuel d'auto-affection que celui d'un geste directeur qui nous tourne vers ses buts ? On remarquera que ce dernier procède à une forme de défense. Un geste qui ne se veut *que* lui-même est un geste qui n'en veut pas d'autres. C'est un geste qui s'oppose à la libération d'autres gestes. C'est donc insinuer ici ce que serait le régime gestuel opposé au premier. Non pas celui du geste qui ne se veut que lui-même mais celui du geste qui se veut lui-même en libérant d'autres gestes, régime de la gestualité ouverte, libre. *C'est un geste qui se veut en suscitant d'autres gestes, c'est un envoi gestuel.* Ce pourquoi les gestes suscités se veulent, ils retentissent entre eux, et se voulant ils en suscitent de nouveaux, prolongeant la volition gestuelle, son envoi. L'auto-affection passe maintenant par ce *retentissement* des gestes qui font sens l'un pour l'autre, elle se traduit par une forte émotion ressentie par chaque acteur. Alors que dans le premier régime gestuel, le geste s'efface derrière son but pour mieux se laisser vouloir, dans ce deuxième régime gestuel, le geste et ses gestes se montrent bien plus que leurs buts (au point que parfois, dans ce régime, il n'y a plus vraiment de buts).

J'en donne quelques traits pour finir, en évoquant des situations. Ce champ de retentissement gestuel est notable quand se manifeste une certaine *spontanéité*. Ainsi l'historien Jacques Rougerie marque bien cette spontanéité

lors de la Commune comme étant la « manière d'être de la révolution dans sa quotidienneté créatrice d'événements et d'idées »<sup>1</sup>. Des gestes-événements décisifs et des gestes-idées retentissent, se renvoient les uns aux autres et ceci avec une certaine exaltation, un enthousiasme, une émotion, qui peuvent aussi être mêlées de colère. Par spontanéité il ne faut pas entendre que ce sont des gestes qui sortiraient de rien, *ex nihilo*, puisque les gestes se renvoient les uns aux autres dans leurs différences, ils se prolongent par ces discontinuités qu'ils provoquent. Ce qui ne veut pas dire non plus qu'un geste *agit* sur un autre, ils se renvoient l'un l'autre car ils appartiennent à un même champ gestuel, ici celui ouvert par l'envoi du geste collectif de la Commune.

Et beaucoup des gestes d'un champ de retentissement sont ce que j'appelle des gestes affectifs. Un geste affectif est un geste indiscernable d'un affect et réciproquement. Par exemple l'affect de générosité n'est-il pas indiscernable d'un geste proprement affectif qu'est celui de donner, distinct d'un acte effectif ? (C'est ce qu'on interprète en parlant d'intention, mais celle-ci n'est que la présence ou non de la volition du geste affectif de donner) Rappelons que Bergson disait de l'affect qu'il était une tendance motrice sur un nerf sensible, en lequel s'interpénètrent donc un geste virtuel et une sensibilité. Quant au geste indiscernable d'un affect, pensons à ce clin d'œil, ces coups d'œil, ces tons d'exhortation, ces bonnets à la main sur lequel Trotsky insiste dans son *Histoire de la révolution russe* dans le passage qu'il consacre au 5 journées de février 1917 au moment de la rencontre des ouvriers et des cosaques. « Les ouvriers de l'usine Erikson [...] après s'être assemblés le matin, s'avancèrent en masse, au nombre de 2500 hommes, sur la Perspective Sampsonovsky, et, dans un passage étroit, tombèrent sur des Cosaques. Poussant leurs chevaux, les officiers fendirent les premiers la foule. Derrière eux, sur toute la largeur de la chaussée, trottaient les Cosaques. Moment décisif ! Mais les cavaliers passèrent prudemment, en longue file, par le couloir que venaient de leur ouvrir des officiers. "Certains d'entre eux souriaient, écrit Kaïourov, et l'un d'eux cligna de l'œil, en copain, du côté des ouvriers ". Il signifiait quelque chose ce clin d'œil ! Les ouvriers s'étaient enhardis, dans un esprit de sympathie et non d'hostilité à l'égard des Cosaques qu'ils avaient légèrement contaminés. L'homme qui avait cligné de l'œil eut des imitateurs<sup>2</sup>. » Plus loin Trotsky poursuit : « en présence d'un peloton de Cosaques [...] quelques [...]

1 Jacques Rougerie, *La commune de 1871*, PUF, 2009, p. 89.

2 Léon Trotsky, *Histoire de la révolution russe*, Seuil, 1950, p. 112.



ouvriers qui n'avaient pas suivi les fuyards se décoiffèrent, s'approchèrent des cosaques, le bonnet à la main : "Frères Cosaques, venez au secours des ouvriers dans leur lutte pour de pacifiques revendications ! Vous voyez comment nous traitent, nous, ouvriers affamés, ces pharaons [la police]. Aidez-nous !" ». Trotsky commente alors : « Ce ton consciemment obséquieux, ces bonnets que l'on tient à la main, quel juste calcul psychologique, quel geste inimitable ! Toute l'histoire des combats de rues et des victoires révolutionnaires fourmille de pareilles improvisations. Mais elles se perdent d'ordinaire dans le gouffre des grands événements, et les historiens ne ramassent qu'un tégument de lieux communs ».<sup>1</sup>

Ces gestes affectifs ne sont pas de simples gestes de communication, ils font événement ( « il signifiait quelque chose ce clin d'œil ! » ), ils se disent du sens affectif de *cette* situation, bien plus ils contribuent à produire ce sens *entre* les acteurs et amorcent affectivement les autres gestes qui viendront, enveloppant alors leur impulsion. Ainsi, après le clin d'œil du Cosaque les ouvriers plongèrent entre les jambes des chevaux des Cosaques censés leur barrer la route. Trotsky commente avec humour : « La révolution ne choisit pas ses voies à son gré : au début de sa marche à la victoire, elle passait sous le ventre d'un cheval cosaque. Episode remarquable ! »<sup>2</sup> La vie du geste collectif, molaire, ne peut pas être saisie sans ce contenu moléculaire des gestes qui sont libérés, le geste se veut par ces gestes. Chaque individu est comme un *centre* d'effectuation du geste collectif qui est donc *polycentré*. Si bien que le geste collectif grâce à sa puissance croissante passe des seuils en se gonflant de volitions gestuelles qui lui permettent de viser des buts qu'on croyait inaccessibles avant. C'est ce que souligne bien encore Trotsky, grâce « au Cosaque qui osa cligner de l'œil du côté de l'ouvrier, [ou grâce] à l'ouvrier qui décida d'emblée que le Cosaque "avait eu le bon coup d'œil" l'interpénétration moléculaire de l'armée et du peuple se poursuivait, ininterrompue. Les ouvriers prenaient constamment la température de l'armée et sentaient aussitôt approcher le point critique. C'est ce qui donna aussi à la poussée des masses, qui croyaient à la victoire, cette force irrésistible »<sup>3</sup>. Le point critique va rendre possible le passage d'un geste à un autre, un enchaînement de gestes, une lignée de gestes. Les buts venant avec leurs gestes ne permettent pas que le geste se fasse

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1 *Ibid.*, pp. 115-116.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 113.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 152.

oublier derrière ses buts car tout a la fraîcheur des naissances et cherche à se dépasser vers d'autres naissances. Contrairement aux gestes qui se veulent eux-mêmes, qui repoussent leur naissance loin derrière eux en nous tournant vers leurs buts, comme s'ils avaient toujours été là.

Ne pensons pas que ce régime gestuel du geste qui se veut en suscitant d'autres gestes ne soit propre qu'à des moments révolutionnaires, à un geste intergestuel d'affrontement comme l'épisode de février, car en parlant de la Commune j'évoquais des gestes certes en résonance avec ceux des gestes de résistance des Communards mais différents d'eux, propres déjà à la vie sous la Commune. Ce régime gestuel peut ainsi se dire d'un geste technique collectif tel, pour revenir plus près de nous, celui des zadistes de Notre-Dame-des-Landes : « A l'ouest de la lande de Rohanne, dans la Châtaignerie, un petit village a été bâti dans le temps d'une semaine, sans autorisation préalable. Cet ensemble de maisons de bois se divise en deux parties : l'une destinée à dormir et à soigner, l'autre composée d'une grande cuisine, une salle de réunion, une taverne et une manufacture. [...] Dès lors commença plus qu'un chantier : une œuvre, une œuvre commune. Tel jour au son d'un duo de saxo et d'accordéon grimpé sur un toit, tel autre sous une pluie battante ; toujours dans la boue et sous les espèces d'une fraternité communicative. Un de ces moments de pur bonheur où l'on pourrait croire qu'un déploiement de forces libres est facile et durerait toujours. [...] Une telle œuvre est le fruit de ce qui, autrefois, portait le beau nom d'émotion populaire. »<sup>1</sup> L'émotion proviendrait pour chacun de l'auto-affection du geste collectif. On peut aussi évidemment imaginer des retentissements entre gestes affectifs, des coups d'œil, des gestes de la main, mais aussi entre gestes techniques, entre gestes en pensée : tient si on faisait ceci comme cela, qui retentit par un autre geste technique, des nouveaux buts apparaissent.

On dira que ce n'est pas ce geste technique collectif seul qui est porteur de cette émotion, étant donné qu'il est un des gestes d'un geste plus ample qui est celui du geste de résistance d'occupation de la ZAD. En effet, ce geste est un retentissement de ce geste de résistance qui se veut à travers lui. C'est dire alors qu'un geste qui commence avec les premières occupations, n'est pas sans insister virtuellement dans tous ses gestes postérieurs, répétition différenciée du geste-événement, ce pourquoi il y a une lignée de gestes

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1 Patrick Drevet, à la Châtaignerie (7 janvier 2013), « Une brèche ouverte ». *ZAD partout*, Montreuil, L'insomniaque, 2013, p. 124.

et ce pourquoi tout ce qui se passe dans le champ des gestes intergestuels est essentiel pour qu'adviennent d'autres gestes retentissants. Ces gestes intergestuels créent, ouvrent un champ. Ils peuvent même l'amorcer *en pensée* chez d'autres, ailleurs. Cette existence d'un geste pensé, en sa part virtuelle, à forte potentialité libératrice, peut en effet, s'il est *bien* exprimé par des écrits, des films, des témoignages, retentir ailleurs. Les gestes libérateurs n'ont pas besoin d'être globaux pour s'opposer à ce qui est global. Ce qui est local a une potentialité de retentissement qui peut susciter d'autres gestes n'importe où, n'importe quand, et donc être un affront à des gestes qui se veulent plus globaux, colonisateurs, comme l'est celui du geste de gouvernementalité néolibérale et ses objectifs : ZAD partout. Les zadistes en ont une vive conscience : « A mesure que se construit cette communauté de lutte s'élabore une critique plus globale, se dessinent de nouveaux terrains de lutte communs : contre la quatre-voie d'accès, contre l'urbanisation et la métropole, pour l'accès au foncier... Le "NON à l'aéroport !" se transforme en "contre l'aéroport et son monde". »<sup>1</sup>

Reprenons succinctement les grands éléments de réponse à la question : que veulent les gestes politiques ? Selon un premier régime (celui du pouvoir), ils se veulent seulement eux-mêmes à travers les buts de nos gestes subordonnés, fermeture sur leur geste. Selon un second régime (celui de l'émancipation), ils veulent d'autres gestes qui retentissent, ouverture aux gestes, envoi gestuel. Ligne filiative ou de perpétuation d'un geste de pouvoir d'un côté, lignée de gestes de l'autre. Affect de ce qui est bon ou mauvais pour un geste ou, pour le régime émancipateur, émotion de gestes producteurs de sens. Détachement ou reproduction par essaimage d'un centre pour les gestes de pouvoir, polycentrage des gestes-événements, champ gestuel pour les gestes émancipateurs. Ces critères propres à démarquer deux polarités opposées des gestes en politique ne doivent pas nous faire penser qu'il n'y a pas des gestes qui permettent que l'on passe d'une polarité à l'autre, tels des gestes de résistances dans un sens ou, dans l'autre sens, la possible formation de concentrations au sein d'un champ gestuel. De plus, ces deux polarités peuvent former des mixtes (par exemple, la Commune de Paris est aussi un geste gouvernemental et c'est aussi ce avec quoi doit composer difficilement tout geste de souveraineté populaire). Par ailleurs, ces critères contournent l'écueil de l'évaluation d'une situation politique par la seule mesure des idées qui sont

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1 ZAD partout, *op.cit.*, p. 26.

brandies (démocratie, république, communisme etc.) ou celles qui servent à désigner ce qui est mauvais pour le geste (tel l'emploi abusif de l'idée de « terrorisme »). D'autant plus que le cantonnement de la politique à la seule discursivité des débats d'idées n'est pas sans être un des plus sûrs moyens de défendre et porter les gestes de pouvoir gouvernementaux actuels et de les perpétuer. Ainsi, il ne s'agit pas d'écouter ceux qui veulent la démocratie sans évaluer le geste qui les pousse à la vouloir.

## Franz Kafka La politique des gestes

ALEXANDRE COSTANZO

Je voudrais évoquer la politique des gestes dans l'œuvre de Franz Kafka. Mais avant de commencer, je vais simplement citer un passage des *Cahiers in-octavo* qui m'a toujours subjugué sans pouvoir vraiment l'élucider. Ce passage est le suivant :

Tout homme porte une chambre en lui. On peut même le vérifier en écoutant. Quand quelqu'un marche vite et que l'on tend l'oreille, la nuit par exemple, lorsque tout est tranquille, on peut entendre le petit bruit d'un miroir mal fixé au mur ou celui d'un chapeau de lampe.<sup>1</sup>

Si cette façon de considérer que tout homme a en lui une chambre sans doute à force d'y avoir passé trop de temps pour finir par lui ressembler ou la porter en soi, si cette idée est bouleversante, que penser de ces petits bruits que feraient un miroir mal fixé au mur ou un chapeau de lampe en tendant l'oreille lorsque on écoute quelqu'un marcher vite dans la rue ? Cet embarras et ces décalages, je tenais simplement à les laisser en exergue pour les partager.

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1 Franz Kafka, *Cahiers in-octavo* (1916-1918), 2012, p. 49.

## Le droit et le tordu

Dans un bref essai consacré à l'œuvre de Franz Kafka<sup>1</sup>, Giorgio Agamben s'attarde sur le statut de l'arpenteur à Rome dont l'activité renvoyait à la définition des confins et des limites. À l'aide de la *groma* – une sorte de croix dont le centre était placé en correspondance d'un point du sol et aux extrémités de laquelle pendaient quatre fils tendus par des poids légers –, ce dernier pouvait ainsi tracer des lignes droites qui devaient permettre de découper le terrain, de le mesurer et d'en asseoir les limites. La possibilité de connaître les frontières des territoires, ajoute-t-il, d'identifier ou d'assigner les portions de sol, de trancher les litiges frontaliers, conditionnait l'exercice même du droit, de sorte que cette figure de l'arpenteur est, parmi d'autres, assimilable à celle d'un « créateur de droit »<sup>2</sup>. Elle renvoie sans doute à ce dont nous parle par ailleurs Émile Benveniste, dans son enquête fameuse établissant la préhistoire linguistique des institutions indo-européennes, en attestant une familiarité entre les notions de « droit », de « région » et de « roi »<sup>3</sup>. Si cette dernière se rapporte d'abord au fait de « se porter en avant dans la direction d'une ligne droite »<sup>4</sup> pour indiquer finalement ce qu'est la voie, le bon chemin à suivre pour une collectivité, et si, en son origine, dans la langue des augures, la « région » désigne « le point atteint par une ligne droite tracée sur la terre ou dans le ciel »<sup>5</sup>, il nous faut donc partir de la notion toute matérielle de « droit » pour l'étendre à ses significations morales, juridiques ou théologiques. Le *rex* était finalement celui qui avait autorité pour tracer l'emplacement des villes, dessiner les frontières et déterminer les règles de droit. Autrement dit, s'il délimitait l'intérieur et l'extérieur, le royaume du sacré et celui du profane, consacrait le territoire commun, il en allait de même avec ce qui est droit et

1 Cf. Giorgio Agamben, *Nudités*, Editions Payot & Rivages, 2009, "K", pp. 39-65.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

3 Émile Benveniste, *Le Vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes 2. Pouvoir, droit, religion*, Editions de minuit, 1994. Dans le chapitre qui nous importe, il est question de la notion latine de « roi » (*rex*) en tant qu'elle appartient à un groupe très ancien de termes relatifs à la religion et au droit. Si Benveniste propose de rapprocher le latin *rego* avec le grec *orégō*, examine les anciennes valeurs de *reg-*, qu'on retrouve notamment dans *regere fines*, *e regione* ou *rectus*, c'est pour déterminer les propriétés de la royauté, du royaume ou de la souveraineté.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 13. C'est ainsi que Benveniste qualifie le grec *orégō* pour le rapprocher de *rex*.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 14. « Le mot important *regio*, écrit-il dans ce même passage, ne veut pas dire à l'origine : « la région » mais le point atteint en ligne droite ».

ce qui est tordu comme une limite passant à l'intérieur de tout un chacun. Le *créateur de droit*, il nous faut donc l'entendre d'abord en un sens littéral : il trace simplement des lignes droites constituant et séparant des mondes, que ce soient les limites géographiques ou bien celles qui déterminent un ensemble de règles, ce que l'on doit faire ou ne pas faire. « Dans *rex*, précise Benveniste, il faut voir moins le souverain que celui qui trace la ligne, la voie à suivre, qui incarne en même temps ce qui est droit » – par opposition à ce qui est « courbé », « tordu »<sup>1</sup>. C'est dire que cette étude scelle une solidarité concernant la partition de la terre et celle de la loi ramenée à un même type de personnage, une adéquation entre *topos* et *nomos* selon laquelle on aura défini par ailleurs le propre de la souveraineté<sup>2</sup>. Mais ce que je voulais dire, c'est elle nous engage aussi bien au lieu d'une crise dès lors qu'il est simplement question d'arpenter autrement un territoire, en déconcertant l'espace, les usages, la loi. A propos de cette crise ou bien de ces lieux, on dira volontiers qu'ils désignent finalement autant de points d'articulation mais aussi d'effondrement entre ce qui est droit et ce qui est tordu. Et cette crise, on en trouvera une occurrence avec ce que Fernand Deligny caractérisait pour sa part comme des *lignes d'erre* mais plus simplement encore en prêtant attention à ce qu'est l'usage de l'espace que s'inventent les enfants ou en s'attardant à toutes les descriptions que propose Pier Paolo Pasolini du sous-prolétariat ou à l'histoire de ce qui est resté à côté, en bas, ailleurs dont les œuvres de Walter Benjamin, Michel Foucault<sup>3</sup> ou encore celles d'Arlette Farge assument en quelque sorte un gardiennage parmi tant d'autres.

Si je raconte tout ceci, c'est qu'il appartient sans doute à Franz Kafka d'avoir, mieux que quiconque, indexé ces points selon un étonnant souci topologique. Et il se trouve, constate Giorgio Agamben dans le même essai, que dans *Le Château*, la profession de K. est précisément celle d'arpenteur. Autrement dit, elle porte sur la « constitution des limites »<sup>4</sup>. Cet homme que personne n'aura employé pour cette tâche qu'il s'attribue lui-même et à qui le maire fera d'ailleurs remarquer que le village n'en n'a nul besoin, est engagé dans une lutte concernant les limites ou les frontières – dont personne

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1 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

2 Cf. notamment Carl Schmitt, *Le Nomos de la terre*, PUF, 2001.

3 Je me permets de renvoyer à mon essai, Alexandre Costanzo, *Les grimaces de la philosophie*, dans la revue *Faillies*, n°3, « Existence/Inexistence », éd. Nous, 2014.

4 *Op. cit.*, p. 60.

ne semble savoir par où elles passent exactement. De sorte que le conflit qui sous-tend cette œuvre, à en croire Giorgio Agamben, ne renvoie pas tant au fait de pouvoir s'installer dans le village et d'être finalement accepté par le Château, mais plutôt d'établir précisément ou bien d'en transgresser, d'en désactiver, d'en désœuvrer les confins. Le litige porte sur la constitution même des seuils et ce sont les bords, les frontières séparant et enlaçant le château et le village que cet arpenteur est venu contester avec « son bâton noueux à portée de main », les limites qui séparent le château du village, mais aussi le haut et le bas, le proche et le lointain, l'intérieur et l'extérieur, l'avant et l'arrière, les confins découpant et articulant mondes divins et humains, pur et impur, transcendance et immanence. A propos de cette limite, dont nul ne sait où elle passe matériellement et qui peut-être n'existe pas en réalité, Giorgio Agamben avance qu'elle semble pourtant loger en chacun de nous comme une « porte invisible »<sup>1</sup>. Et ce serait cette « porte » que cherche à neutraliser le narrateur ou du moins à localiser, de sorte qu'Agamben ajoutera en guise de conclusion :

Ce que seraient donc le haut et le bas, le divin et l'humain, le pur et l'impur si la porte (c'est-à-dire le système des lois écrites ou non écrites, qui en règle les relations) avait été neutralisée, ce que serait enfin ce « monde de la vérité » [...] : c'est ce que l'arpenteur pourra presque entrevoir ?<sup>2</sup>

L'œuvre de Franz Kafka serait ainsi finalement assimilable à un curieux traité de géométrie, d'architecture ou de droit et l'on pourrait presque réduire sa démarche à une question enfantine pour se demander ce qu'est au juste une porte. Car tout semble se passer comme si cet arpenteur n'avait que cette idée en tête, une idée insensée. Tout semble se passer comme s'il nous engageait dans une étonnante histoire de la perception et de l'attention où s'agirait de localiser des coordonnées, à la fois physiques et métaphysiques, de ces « portes » qui serait peut-être là « à côté », devant ou dans un coin. Qu'il s'agisse donc de venir déboîter les gonds pour désœuvrer un certain ordre des choses, à en croire Agamben, qu'il s'agisse de toutes ces portes que l'on ouvre et que l'on ferme en arpentant sans cesse des couloirs ou de ce qui se passe dans la pièce d'à-côté en écho à ce que disaient Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guat-

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1 *Ibid.* p.64.

2 *Ibid.* p.65.



tari, ou même de composer avec une porte qui n'est plus là comme l'indique Kafka dans un autre passage de ses *Cahiers in-octavo* où il écrit :

maintenant tu es ici à l'abri dans un coin, même si la porte est depuis longtemps sortie de ses gonds et déplacée. Mais toi, tu tâtonnes encore dans le vide, comme si tu voulais fermer cette porte, puis tu t'allonges.<sup>1</sup>

A chaque fois donc, Kafka nous engage dans une scène métaphysique et politique, où un simple geste remet en question la façon dont le monde est scellé/descellé. Ou pour le dire autrement, le conflit entre transcendance et immanence nous est donné sous la forme d'un décalage, d'une inadéquation, d'une désorientation, d'un déboîtement et c'est sans doute cela que peut presque entrevoir l'arpenteur, cela aussi qu'on peut entendre en tendant l'oreille avec un chapeau de lampe ou un miroir mal fixé lorsque quelqu'un presse le pas dans la rue.

### Le théâtre des gestes

A propos de Franz Kafka, des sociétés que ce dernier dépeint mais surtout des êtres de tous ordres qui y circulent, Walter Benjamin nous dit que l'homme d'aujourd'hui vit dans son corps comme un étranger, un exilé. Et de fait dans certains écrits, il nous faut souvent un bon moment avant de nous rendre compte que c'est là d'une taupe, ailleurs d'une souris, d'un singe qui est devenu homme et ici d'un cancrelat dont on nous raconte l'histoire et les pensées. Entre un corps et des mots qui ne coïncident plus avec eux-mêmes et l'éclosion d'organismes nouveaux, on retrouve une vieille parabole nietzschéenne<sup>2</sup> comme autant de ratages, paradoxes, symptômes ou possibles avortés jalonnant la description que fait Kafka d'un « monde défiguré ». C'est du moins ainsi que Benjamin désigne son œuvre comme un étonnement face « aux déformations presque incompréhensibles de l'existence » et il ajoute que tout ce que Kafka « décrit est en même temps un énoncé sur autre chose »<sup>3</sup>. Le décalage, l'ajournement, la contiguïté, le malentendu, l'idiotie, l'ignorance, cette appréhension de l'inachevé, du différé ou de ce qui se passe juste

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1 *Op. cit.*, p. 108.

2 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ainsi parlait Zarathoustra*, Folio, 1998.

3 Walter Benjamin, *Œuvres II*, Folio essais, p. 288.

là dans la pièce d'à-côté, seraient en somme des figures qui émergent de cette prose où la réalité ne coïncide plus avec elle-même. Elle est déformée au lieu de ces descriptions minutieuses d'une situation à la fois ordinaire et incompréhensible. Elle est déformée au détour de créatures composites ouvrant la scène d'un grand malentendu entre les corps, les objets et les mots. Et comme se réveille Gregor un beau matin sans pouvoir se mettre à son aise dans son lit après sa métamorphose, ignorant ce qui lui est arrivé, c'est naturellement non loin de la clinique freudienne qu'on appréhende ce travail d'un mauvais rêve entre oubli, refoulement et forclusion ou indices, signes et symptômes.

On dira donc que la « réalité est déformée », c'est-à-dire simplement que le monde, les choses ou que la vie est mal faite. Mais aussi, dans un grand effroi, que la réalité est comme trouée par un « réel ». Et cette « relation », ce battement, s'incarne ainsi dans une taupe logeant dans des galeries souterraines qui nous raconte sa vie, à travers le destin d'un homme insecte, d'une bobine de ficelle qui parle et qui rit, au détour d'un château ou tout au long d'un procès... Or si le monde est déformé ou si tout à coup il se déforme, ce serait le fait d'une loi inconnue, organisant, structurant ou travaillant ce qu'on caractérise comme la « civilisation ». C'est peut-être ce que Freud appelle la « pulsion »<sup>1</sup>, et c'est en tout cas ce que Benjamin désigne comme le marécage des origines oubliées. Ce marécage, nous dit-il à propos de Kafka, n'a jamais cessé d'exister, il est ici, simplement nous ne sommes plus capables de le percevoir et d'identifier son action. Il travaille peut-être au désœuvrement du monde et des hommes à moins qu'il ne porte une promesse heureuse. On ne sait rien de cette puissance inconnue qui ouvre un possible obscène, on ne sait si elle fonde, si elle interrompt ou si elle effondre le monde. Elle défigure sans doute les choses on ne sait où, comment, quelque part entre le « réel » et la réalité.

Ceci dit, on trouve dans un des recueils de Franz Kafka une très brève nouvelle, *Les arbres*, qui viendra condenser ce malaise en statuant sur la condition humaine. Il écrit :

Nous sommes en effet comme les troncs d'arbres dans la neige. On dirait bien qu'ils sont juste posés bien à plat et qu'on pourrait les faire glisser en les poussant un peu. Mais non, on ne peut pas, car ils sont solidement attachés au sol. Seulement voilà, même cela n'est qu'une apparence.

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1 Je renvoie sur ce point à l'œuvre de Slavoj Žižek.

Il y a dans ces quelques lignes tout l'espoir entravé de Kafka décrivant un monde où les choses sont à la fois « mal en place » et « inamovibles ». Il nous dit, comme s'y essayent parfois les enfants, qu'il suffirait de pousser, de faire glisser légèrement ces troncs d'arbres, de jouer à déplacer un peu les choses pour se reformuler soi-même, le monde et pourquoi pas ainsi être heureux. Il n'y a pas grand-chose à faire : pousser ici cet arbre, et par extension, décaler ailleurs cette fenêtre, cette chaise et puis ce mur aussi... Se déplacer soi-même, les choses et les gens qui nous entourent pour que tout change ou que tout revienne enfin en place. C'est le travail en somme d'une femme de ménage ou plutôt de ces personnages étranges qui circulent tout le long de son œuvre : commis, messagers, fonctionnaires, sous-secrétaires, aides, auxiliaires ou assistants... Or voilà on ne le peut pas : il y a la réalité – l'homme est enraciné, inamovible. Cette imaginaire, cette rêverie enfantine est piégée dans une bulle d'apparence, et, ajoute-t-il comme un paradoxe retournant son propos, même cela n'est qu'une apparence. Il nous propose ainsi un autre lieu commun, celui où la réalité vient à se dissoudre comme une apparence, dans un rêve de plus ou dans un « marécage ». Ce serait peut-être là sa formule du « réel » – qui se dérobe et se déploie, fuit dans et comme des distorsions d'apparences.

Mais ce qui m'intéresse est d'abord cette aspiration enfantine laissée en suspens, coincée dans un espace et une temporalité imaginaire : « pousser les choses ». Et puis aussi selon cette structure ou cet emboîtement d'apparences : le principe de déformation. Il y a d'un côté, cette impulsion de déplacements légers comme un jeu incessant d'ajustements et de déformations imaginaires proposant une image avortée, en reste, issue d'une rêverie, celle des arbres coulissant sur la neige. Et de l'autre côté, un grand principe métaphysique de déformation où la réalité en vient à se dissoudre elle-même comme apparence – c'est que le temps, l'espace, l'ordre des choses sont dépravés. Bref, entre la grande déformation et les petits déplacements, il y a à la fois une convergence et une contrariété : on déforme par l'imaginaire les choses or tout cela est pris dans un principe de déformation plus vaste qui nous dépasse, de sorte qu'il ne reste à la fin que cette « image » inaboutie, irréaliste et dissolue presque, « pousser les arbres ».

Or tout cela nous ramène à la fable de ce Petit Bossu dont parle souvent Benjamin dans ses écrits, un malin génie sorti des chansons populaires qui vient désorganiser malicieusement les choses à l'heure du coucher. Car en somme ce personnage au dos courbé, issu des contes de fée, qui porte une

charge bien trop lourde, le poids des choses et les âges du monde, ce personnage devient ainsi avec sa bosse l’emblème même de la déformation : il est courbé, tordu, dépravé. Et le rêve consiste à espérer que les fées ou bien alors qu’un messie viennent enfin lui supprimer cette bosse. C’est que pour Benjamin, Kafka présente le monde dans un état défiguré en attente de délivrance, mais cette altération est telle qu’aucune action ne peut y remédier, et seul un miracle pourrait le remettre en ordre. Voilà ce il écrit<sup>1</sup> à propos du Bossu :

Ce petit homme est l’habitant de la vie déformée, il disparaîtra avec la venue du Messie dont un grand rabbin a dit qu’il ne changerait pas le monde de force, mais remettrait seulement les choses un tout petit peu en place.

Dans cette parabole messianique il nous dit encore que, dans le monde rédimé, tout sera comme ici-bas, notre chambre demeurera comme elle est et les habits que nous endossons, nous les porterons également là-bas : tout demeurera comme à présent, « à peine modifié ». Cette histoire que lui rapporta un soir Benjamin, Ernst Bloch la formule à son tour<sup>2</sup> :

Un rabbin, un vrai cabaliste, dit un jour : Afin d’instaurer le règne de la paix, il n’est nullement besoin de tout détruire et de donner naissance à un monde totalement nouveau ; il suffit de déplacer *à peine* cette tasse ou cet arbrisseau ou cette pierre, en faisant de même pour toutes les choses. Mais cet *à peine* est si difficile à réaliser et il est si difficile de trouver sa mesure qu’en ce qui concerne ce monde les hommes en sont incapables

Entre Franz Kafka, Ernst Bloch et Walter Benjamin, entre puissance et impuissance, ce qui est possible et ce qui est impossible, on a finalement une curieuse définition de ce qu’est la Révolution. Une définition procédant d’un étrange rapport entre les mots, les actes et les choses. Car voilà : on ne va certainement pas changer ou vivre dans un autre monde, ou plutôt pour qu’il change, il faut juste déplacer un peu les choses, toutes les choses.

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1 Walter Benjamin, *ibid.*, p. 445.

2 Je renvoie au très beau texte que consacre Giorgio Agamben à ces passages, cf. *La communauté qui vient*, Seuil, 1990.

Disons qu'on découvre ainsi entre Walter Benjamin et Franz Kafka une même « histoire » où il n'est question que d'infimes déplacements : déplacer les objets, déplacer les corps, les perceptions, voilà peut-être à quoi ressemblerait le monde émancipé. Car telle est bien la question : Où est donc passé ou bien qu'en est-il exactement du monde émancipé ? Et qu'est-ce que la Révolution ? Ce monde, nous disent-ils, il n'aura pas changé de beaucoup, il sera à *peine modifié* en décalant les choses de quelques centimètres ou en portant sur elles une oreille et un œil nouveaux. Et dans cette nouvelle de Kafka que je citais comme dans toute son œuvre, on a toujours affaire à des gestes improbables : à une autre mesure entre les hommes, les choses et le monde, à l'innocence entravée d'un déplacement improbable.

Or ce n'est pas pour rien que dans la lecture qu'il propose de son œuvre, après avoir défini son propos comme une description minutieuse de la réalité déformée où viendraient se disputer un Petit Bossu et le Messie, Benjamin s'attarde sur le « théâtre de gestes » qui y fourmillent. Et ce sera pour lui dans *l'Amérique* de Kafka qu'on pourra envisager ce lieu : dans le mystérieux théâtre d'Oklahoma. Ce grand théâtre engage *n'importe qui* selon des critères qui nous sont inconnus et il semble que ses « comédiens » n'aient qu'une chose à faire : jouer leur propre rôle. Bref, cette scène ne fera que rassembler des gens qui devront simplement être fidèles à leurs gestes, ici et maintenant. S'ils y parviennent, « ils seront peut-être sauvés » nous dit-il, mais il faut trouver le geste juste. Et de fait Kafka, au détour de ses histoires, nous confronte à une galerie étonnante de gestes incongrus. Il y a là un personnage qui est « courbé d'effroi », il y a ces assistants maladroits et incapables qui vous épient, ailleurs ces « têtes penchées » par la fatigue ou par les plafonds trop bas, tellement penchées qu'on ne peut discerner les yeux. Il y a aussi cette secrétaire qui prend des notes, mais son interlocuteur parle tellement bas, qu'elle doit se lever, aller coller son oreille au plus près de lui, se rasseoir pour écrire, et recommencer à nouveau cette cérémonie qui nous propose un ballet incongru... Et que dire de Gregor qui peine à se mettre sur son « côté droit », la position privilégiée dans laquelle il s'endort ou encore de cette posture de son patron dont il rend compte avec agacement :

Quelle habitude aussi de se percher sur le bord du comptoir et de haranguer de là-haut ses employés ! Surtout quand on est dur d'oreille comme le patron et qu'on oblige les gens à s'approcher tout près !

Ce que je veux dire, c'est qu'on découvre donc de curieuses incises dans ses écrits, des attitudes, des gestes en décalages, incohérents, et qui sont un peu comme les arbres « mal en place ».

Or c'est précisément ce qui m'intéresse : un « mal en place » caractérisant les paysages, les situations, les choses, les corps, mais aussi bien le temps. On y éprouve certainement la réalité comme déformée mais c'est surtout là que se joue l'émancipation dans l'œuvre de Franz Kafka – dans un décalage léger par rapport à la situation. Je dirais que toutes ces attitudes, tous ces gestes jouent les scènes du monde émancipé, mais ils les jouent en quelque sorte au mauvais endroit : ils sont « ici » et « là-bas » en même temps, ils sont comme égarés dans le monde, décalés ou suspendus à la manière d'entorses, comme si au beau milieu de leur vie quotidienne des personnages répétaient en même temps une mystérieuse pièce de théâtre, et ce serait celle du monde émancipé. Ou pour le dire autrement, si ces gestes sont déplacés, incongrus, improbables, c'est qu'ils déplacent en même temps ou du moins ils essaient de déplacer à leur manière les choses et le monde : ils déboîtent dans un grand malentendu la réalité, ils poussent en quelque sorte les arbres alors qu'il n'y a pas d'arbres, tout comme, dans le passage que je citais, une main tâtonne dans le vide pour fermer une porte qui n'est plus là depuis longtemps. Bref, ces gestes déplacent les choses et le monde, mais ils ne le font pas au bon endroit, au bon moment, ou bien nous n'avons pas les yeux pour voir ce qu'est un bon endroit. C'est ce décalage entre le lieu, le temps, les objets et les gestes dont je voulais parler, des gestes pour rien en quelque sorte et qui sont pourtant là pour réajuster les choses.

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Pour conclure, je voudrais simplement convoquer un essai que consacre Lorenz Jagër à Walter Benjamin en s'attachant à la sphère de la gestualité. Il constate que si au début de l'essai sur Kafka, Benjamin décline une sorte de catalogue postural de personnages défaits et courbés, le dos toujours encombré par des charges trop lourdes, la dernière phrase de l'essai renvoyant à Sancho Pança que Kafka décrit comme un « homme libre » est la suivante : « Homme ou cheval, cela n'a plus guère d'importance, pourvu qu'on lui enlève son fardeau ». Alors comment expliquer qu'aux deux extrémités de son texte, Benjamin ancre ces images, suggérant un personnage courbé d'abord et

finallement celui à qui on a enlevé son fardeau ? En prenant vraiment au sérieux cette remarque, on doit se résoudre à penser que l'espace et le temps du commentaire lui-même, dans lequel nous emporte Walter Benjamin, constitue une sorte d'ellipse ou d'éclipse entre ces deux images. Autrement dit, c'est un espace et un temps pendant lequel, selon une autre entrée ou alors un autre langage, il ne nous raconte rien d'autre que l'histoire d'un déplacement, en l'occurrence d'un personnage qui relève enfin la tête. On ne verra pas ce mouvement s'effectuer et c'est sans doute qu'il s'accomplit selon d'autres manières, dans un coin, ailleurs ou pendant ce temps, et pourtant l'essai de Walter Benjamin n'est rien d'autre que l'histoire posturale de ce mouvement, un bougé. Tandis que le corps fait son chemin pour changer de position et de perception, qu'une libération s'affirme, le développement de l'essai, où il est par ailleurs question de déformation, anime selon un mouvement intérieur ce personnage.

Alors on aura compris à travers toutes les figures que j'ai esquissées selon des entrées diverses, dans le compagnonnage de Walter Benjamin et de Giorgio Agamben, que la question que je pose à Franz Kafka est finalement la suivante : qu'est-ce que la Révolution ? Car je crois que ce problème est celui que rumine son œuvre entière. Et sans doute que l'on y découvre aussi une sorte de portrait de notre monde car c'est sous la forme du ratage, de l'échec, de l'étude et finalement selon le constat et l'hypothèse de l'impuissance que cela nous est donné.

Il y a un arpenteur qui vient, dans un monde déformé, pour mesurer autrement les choses et les remettre en ordre, ou pour tenter de localiser des « portes » qui peut-être n'existent pas. Si ces dernières sont le chiffre égaré, à la fois physique et métaphysique, d'un Ouvert ou de la Révolution qui n'est toujours pas là, parce qu'elle est loin derrière, devant ou simplement toujours à côté, l'arpenteur actualise pourtant l'histoire de sa vérification en mesurant autrement le monde.

Il y a ces assistants tordus, maladroits et inutiles et qui sont toujours « mal en place » tout comme ces têtes penchées, ces séries de gestes, de situations, de postures improbables, tout au long de son œuvre. Or je crois que nous avons là à chaque fois des boussoles de la révolution. L'hypothèse que l'on peut se formuler concernant cette physique et cette métaphysique de la déformation et finalement sur ce théâtre des gestes, comme un constat enfantin, c'est que les choses sont « mal en place » et que le monde, comme chacun d'entre nous, est à côté de lui-même. Et pourtant ces suites de gestes inadéquats tentent de

le remettre en ordre – c'est la politique des gestes dans l'œuvre de Franz Kafka. Ce qu'il nous dit comme un constat trivial, que j'envisage à la fois comme puissance et impuissance, c'est que le moment est toujours déjà là mais que nous n'avons peut-être pas les yeux pour le voir et les oreilles pour l'entendre. Ce déplacement de notre perception et de notre attention, renvoie sans doute à cet « à peine » dont on parlait, de sorte que si ce que l'on découvre dans son œuvre, ce sont des gestes impuissants, inadéquats, inachevés – comme autant d'entorses –, dans cette impuissance même il y a une puissance, un « peut-être ». Peut-être, cela veut dire que l'on ne sait pas vraiment, que l'on se trompe probablement, qu'il en est sans doute autrement. Peut-être, cela renvoie aussi à la possibilité. Il y a bien un peu partout des « peut-être » dans l'œuvre de Franz Kafka, et c'est finalement ce qu'il nous confie comme boussole de la révolution.



## Orienti dhe trupat në krijimtarinë e Kadaresë<sup>1</sup>

ENIS SULSTAROVA

### Hyrje

Ismail Kadare me krijimtarinë e tij ka prekur periudha kyçe të historisë mesjetare dhe moderne të popullit shqiptar. Ai ka përfshirë në romanet e tij ngjarje dhe motive nga koha para-osmane, kryengritjen e Skënderbeut, periudhën e sundimit osman, turbullirat që ndoqën shpalljen e pavarësisë, luftën partizane për çlirimin e Tiranës, periudhën socialiste dhe sidomos ndërprerjet e marrëdhënieve të Shqipërisë me Bashkimin Sovjetik e më pas me Kinën, atmosferën e terrorit komunist etj. Motivi qendror që ndeshet në shumicën e veprave të tij madhore që nga vitet 60 të shekullit të kaluar është qëndresa e popullit shqiptar në histori. Edhe pse gjatë komunizmit Kadareja lavdërohej nga kritika zyrtare si një nga përfaqësuesit kryesorë të letërsisë së realizmit socialist, ai në disa prej veprave të tij ka përdorur një gjuhë dykuptimëshe, që mund të interpretohet edhe si një kritikë e maskuar e totalitarizmit komunist. Madje në dorëshkrim ai ruajti edhe vepra që ishin në mënyrë të hapur armiqësore ndaj regjimit komunist dhe që u botuan pas rënies së tij.

Në vitet e tranzicionit paskomunist, Kadareja e ka përdorur kapitalin e tij profesional si shkrimtari më i njohur shqiptar brenda dhe jashtë vendit,

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1 Botuar në revistën *Studime Sociale* (vëll. 10, nr. 2, 2016) të Institutit Shqiptar të Sociologjisë.

për t'u paraqitur si një ndër intelektualët më në zë që prononcohen për çështje të rëndësishme publike. Një çështje qendrore për të cilën ai është përkushtuar si intelektual publik është integrimi i vendit të tij në Bashkimin Evropian. Në një numër esesh dhe intervistash të botuara në Shqipëri dhe në shtypin evropian, ai ka marrë përsipër rolin e ndërmjetësit midis atdheut të tij dhe “Evropës”, për të sheshuar keqkuptimet e ndërsjella që, sipas tij, kanë penguar apo ngadalësuar afrimin dhe pranimin e Shqipërisë në “kontinentin mëmë”. Të gjitha këto i japin veprës së tij letrare dhe eseistike një karakter të fuqishëm politik, jo në kuptimin e politikës partiake, por në atë të angazhimit për krijimin dhe përhapjen e përfytyrimeve dhe ideve që kanë të bëjnë me thelbin e historisë së kombit dhe misionin e tij. Kjo është arsyeja pse një kritik ka shkruar se “çdo faqe e historisë së saj [Shqipërisë], të kaluar e të sotme, e ka jehonën në veprat që ai ka shkruar. Krijimtaria e Kadaresë është një enciklopedi artistike e fateve të këtij vendi” (Çausi, 2004: 241). Në këtë mënyrë, krijimtaria e Kadaresë është një shembull i “letërsive luftarake”, të cilat janë të angazhuara politikisht, përshkohen nga ndjenjat kombëtare dhe janë terren për të ngritur pretendime të ekzistencës kombëtare në arenën ndërkombëtare. Letërsi luftarake janë sidomos ato të popujve të vegjël të dominuar për pjesën më të madhe të historisë së tyre nga perandori dhe pushtues të huaj. Për rrjedhojë, te veprat e shkrimtarëve të tyre më të mëdhenj pashmangshëm spikat tema e mbijetesës dhe e fatit të kombit (Casanova, 2011).

Studime të tjera na kanë bërë të qartë se shumë prej veprave letrare dhe eseve të Kadaresë përshkohen nga ligjërimi i orientalizmit (shih p.sh. Sulstarova, 2013). Me orientalizëm këtu në radhë të parë kuptojmë “një mënyrë të menduarit, e mbështetur në dallimin ontologjik dhe epistemologjik që bëhet ndërmjet ‘Orientit’ dhe (të shumtën e herëve) ‘Oksidentit’” (Said, 2009: 24). Në ligjërimin e orientalizmit, Oksidenti apo Perëndimi apo Evropa zë pozitën më të lartë dhe shenjon të mirën, përparimin, arsyen, të ardhmen apo qytetërimin “tonë” perëndimor, ndërsa Orienti apo Azia shenjon të keqen, prapambetjen, të shkuarën apo ekzotiken. Ky dallim u formua në Evropën Perëndimore si një mënyrë për t'u marrë me kulturat, fetë dhe kundërshtarët politikë në rajonet e Levantit, Magrebit, e mandej edhe të Evropës Lindore, Azisë Qendrore dhe Lindjes së Largët. Në kohërat moderne, orientalizmi është i lidhur ngushtë me zgjerimin perëndimor nëpër botë dhe me ideologjitë e kolonializmit e imperializmit. Kështu, në kulturën dhe artet perëndimore, orientalizmi ofron “pikënisje për teori të përpunuara, për epose, romane,

përshkrime shoqërore dhe raporte politike lidhur me Orientin, me njerëzit e tij, zakonet, ‘mendjen’, fatin e kështu më tej” (po aty: 25). Orientalizmi modern i lindur në Perëndim udhëtoi edhe në kultura të tjera në Evropë e përtej, sepse kombet që po modernizoheshin i ndërtuan identitetet e tyre në pasqyrën e Oksidentit. Për pasojë, siç e shpreh një historian, “në një epokë të modernitetit të dominuar nga Perëndimi, çdo komb krijon Orientin e tij” (Makdisi, 2002: 768). Në orientalizmin shqiptar, që erdhi në jetë me lëvizjen politike dhe shoqërore të Rilindjes Kombëtare, orientalët kryesorë të kombit shqiptar janë turqit dhe ata kanë mbetur deri në ditët tona “tjetri” aziatik që kërcënon identitetin evropian të shqiptarëve (Sulstarova, 2013). Imazhi i shqiptarëve që ndeshim në romanet dhe esetë e Kadaresë është ai i një populli të lashtë me rrënjë evropiane, kultura popullore e të cilit, e përcjellë gojë më gojë ndër breza, shfaq një ngjashmëri të madhe me kulturën e lashtë greke. Ky popull, në një fazë të historisë së tij të pashkëputur evropiane, u përball me pushtimin “barbar” të turqve osmanë të ardhur nga Azia. Motivi që lidh një pjesë të rëndësishme të krijimtarisë së Kadaresë është pikërisht qëndresa dhe mbijetesa e kulturës evropiane të popullit shqiptar gjatë “kohës së errët” të sundimit gjysmëshekullor osman (po aty: kap. 5).

Te ky artikull vazhdojmë eksplorimin e ligjërimit orientalist tek krijimtaria e Kadaresë, kësaj radhe duke u përqendruar te përdorimi i trupave për të artikuluar dallimet midis botës evropiane dhe asaj osmano-islamike. Trupi i njeriut është vendndodhja për ndërtimet e dallimeve gjinore, etnike apo racore dhe këtu ne eksplorojmë ato përshkrime të trupave në veprat letrare dhe esetë e Kadaresë që synojnë të paraqesin te lexuesi kontrastin midis “neve” dhe “atyre”. Duke u pozicionuar si shkrimtar brenda ligjërimit orientalist, Kadareja ka qenë në gjendje që të krijojë një botë imagjinare osmane që është ekzotike, mizore, despotike, groteske dhe e ndryshme nga bota “jonë” shqiptare. Edhe pse kemi të bëjmë me trill (fiksion) letrar, ky sidoqoftë i referohet periudhës historike të sundimit osman në trevat shqiptare dhe mbështetet te tezat e historiografisë shqiptare mbi natyrën dhe domethënien e sundimit turk në Shqipëri. Botimi i romanit *Kështjella* i Kadaresë në frëngjisht, në vitin 1972, u shoqërua me një parathënie të historianit Aleks Buda (2000), në mënyrë që ata lexues francezë që nuk e njihnin historinë e Shqipërisë të kuptonin saktë kuadrin historik brenda të cilit vendosen ngjarjet e romanit.

Megjithatë, bota imagjinare, despotike dhe mizore osmane e Kadaresë është, si të thuash, një parabolë e distiluar prej tij jo vetëm nga Perandoria historike Osmane, por edhe nga shtete e tjera orientale. Sipas një hipoteze

që ai ngre, lindja e tragjedisë greke pasqyron tmerret, ankthet dhe krimet e shteteve diktatoriale që ndodheshin në lindje të Greqisë së Lashtë: Perandoria Perse, Perandoria Hitite, Perandoria Asiriane-Babilonase dhe Egjipti i faraonëve. Shekuj më pas, të njëjtën atmosferë tmerri shkrimtarët ballkanikë do ta gjenin te Perandoria Osmane, e cila jo vetëm që shtrihej në territoret e këtyre perandorive të antikitetit, por edhe ndante me to të njëjtat karakteristika dhe gjithashtu ishte edhe pararendëse e perandorive moderne naziste e sovjetike. Elementi themelor i Perandorisë Osmane, që përbën thelbin e shteteve despotike të të gjithë kohërave, është burokracia e saj, të cilën Kadareja e quan “përbindshëm i makthshëm” dhe “makineri infernale”. Sipas tij, tipari totalitar i burokracisë osmane është kuptuar më së miri nga shkrimtarët ballkanikë, por jo nga ata perëndimorë apo turq. Të parët kanë parë nga jashtë një perandori ekzotike, ndërsa shkrimtarët turq kanë qenë shumë pranë saj për ta parë siç duhet (Kadare, 1990: 169; Kadare & Faye, 2007: 32-33). Ndërsa optika e shkrimtarëve ballkanikë, midis tyre edhe e Kadaresë, duket se është ajo “midis” jashtësisë dhe brendësisë, sepse bazohet te perspektiva e popujve që dikur kanë qenë të sunduar prej Perandorisë Osmane, por që tani janë subjekte sovraane në Evropë. Në të vërtetë, pavarësisht hipotezës që ngre Kadareja, modeli sociologjik i qeverisjes dhe shoqërisë osmane që gjendet në romanet e tij është ai i “despotizmit oriental”, i formuluar së pari nga Monteskjeja te *Fryma e ligjeve* dhe më pas i përhapur gjerësisht te shumë intelektualë perëndimorë që kanë shkruar për dallimet midis Evropës dhe Azisë. Sipas këtij modeli, në shoqëritë aziatike sundimtari ndodhet mbi ligjin dhe ka pushtet të pakufizuar mbi nënshtetasit e tij, të cilët i trajton si skllevër. Këto tipa shoqërish janë statike dhe nuk mund të ndryshojnë lehtë, prandaj ndryshimi cilësor mund të vijë vetëm nga jashtë tyre. Edhe pse “despotizmi oriental” u formua gjatë debateve iluministe në Evropë mbi pushtetin e monarkisë dhe të drejtat e qytetarisë dhe paraqiste veçse një karikaturë të Perandorisë Osmane në epokën e saj të rënies, si model teorik i dallimeve midis shoqërive evropiane dhe aziatike, ai pati një ndikim të madh mbi orientalizmin akademik, sociologjinë dhe historiografinë perëndimore. Ai nuk është zhvlerësuar akoma përfundimisht, me gjithë shtimin e hulumtimeve të dhjetëvjeçarëve të fundit që paraqesin një pamje tjetër të qeverisjes në Perandorinë Osmane (p.sh. Barkey, 2008). Sigurisht që kemi të bëjmë me anakronizëm atëherë kur Kadareja i vesh burokracisë së Perandorisë Osmane cilësi të burokracive të shteteve totalitare të shek. XX dhe ndonjëherë është një anakronizëm fatlum, sepse analogjia

me Perandorinë Osmane i ka mundur kritikën ndaj sistemit komunist dhe e ka ruajtur nga përndjekja politike, si p.sh. te *Nëpunësi i Pallatit të Ëndrrave*. Mirëpo, te krijimtaria dhe angazhimi i Kadaresë si intelektual publik, modelet letrare nuk janë të ndara nga historia dhe realiteti i sotëm. Orientalizmi përbën perspektivën me të cilën gjykon procesin e integritit evropian të shqiptarëve dhe për rrjedhojë, ai herë pas herë i ka rënë kambanës së alarmit për rikthimin e Orientit në Shqipëri.

Ndërsa sa më sipër kemi pasur rastin t'i shprehim edhe tjetërkund, shpresojmë se ky artikull do të hapë rrugën për hulumtimin e përdorimit politik të trupit në letërsinë e Kadaresë. Trupi i njeriut ka shërbyer si një metaforë e përhershme për marrëdhëniet shoqërore dhe politike. Jo vetëm që fraza "trupi politik" shenjon organizimin politik, por edhe pjesë të trupit janë përdorur përherë si metafora për grupet apo institucionet e ndryshme shoqërore e politike. P.sh. në Mesjetë, mbreti gjithmonë është parë si koka e trupit politik, ndërsa ushtria si krahët e këtij të fundit, duke vazhduar me radhë me klerin si zemra, fshatarësia si këmbët etj. Përtej përdorimit metaforik, trupi politik është i themeluar mbi dhe nëpërmjet trupit fizik. Pushteti politik e ka rrënjën në pushtetin mbi trupin ("biopushteti" siç e emërton filozofi francez Mishel Fuko) dhe pushteti i shtetit disiplinon, policon, kontrollon dhe kujdeset për jetët dhe trupat e nënshtetasve/qytetarëve (p.sh. ligjet pro/kundër abortit, apo institucione dhe praktika si ushtria, burgjet, shkollat, censuset, përkrahja shoqërore etj.). Biopushteti ka gjetur përfaqësim në letërsi, por edhe vetë letërsia është vënë drejtpërsëdrejti në përdorim të qeverisjes së shpirtit dhe trupave të qytetarëve, siç ka ndodhur me letërsinë e realizmit socialist në vendet ish-komuniste, e cila ishte pjesë e një aparati kulturor, politik dhe didaktik për krijimin e njeriut të ri.

Publicisti flamand Piet de Moor (2007: 45-48) ka vërejtur në veprat e Kadaresë një marrëdhënie të ngushtë të trupit me politikën. Ky vërtetim mund të ilustruhet me shumë pjesë nga romanet e Kadaresë. Kështu, te *Viti i mbrapshtë*, fanatikët myslimanët shqiptarët i kërkojnë princit gjerman Vid që të bëhet synet dhe vetëm pas heqjes së kësaj pjese të vogël të lëkurës premtojnë që ta njohin si sovran legjitim të Shqipërisë. Po te ky roman gjejmë diplomatët e huaj të akredituar në Shqipëri duke shkëmbyer sekrete diplomatike mbi trupin e një prostitute me të cilën flenë dhe kjo e fundit fillon dhe ëndërron për rolin e saj në politikën e historinë e shtetit të ri. Në romanin *Gjenerali i ushtrisë së vdekur*, një gjeneral italian dërgohet në Shqipëri që të marrë mbetjet e trupave të vdekur të ushtarëve italianë të

Luftës së Dytë Botërore. Një episod në fund të romanit *Koncert në fund të dimrit* ka në qendër një punëtor shqiptar që i shkel këmbën një kolegu kinez në fabrikë. Ky incident i vogël kthehet në një çështje diplomatike në mesin e marrëdhënieve të tensionuara midis dy vendeve komuniste. Personazhi kryesor i një romani tjetër, *Jeta, loja dhe vdekja e Lul Mazrekut*, është një ushtar shqiptar në shërbim në një qytezë pranë kufirit në periudhën e fundit të sundimit komunist. Ai urdhërohet nga eprorët që të shtiret si i vdekur në publik, sikur është trupi i dikujt të vrarë nga rojet kufitare – në këtë mënyrë duke luajtur lojën makabër të shtetit për t'i shtirë tmerrin popullatës dhe për të shkrajtur orvatje të tjera për kalimin e kufirit.

Gjithashtu, Kadareja e përdor metaforën e trupit apo të mishit për t'iu referuar kombeve. Në një nga romanet e tij, një personazh mediton për kombet rebele të Perandorisë Osmane dhe një mendim që i vjen në kokë është që do të ishte më e mira për shtetin nëse do të hiqte qafe disa nga pjesët e tij që e shqetësojnë, “si njeriu që heq nga trupi mishin e huaj” (Kadare, 1989: 18). Vite më vonë, në esenë *Identiteti evropian i shqiptarëve*, Kadareja shkruan se kombi shqiptar u dëmtua në trup e në shpirt nga sundimi i gjatë osman. Përveç kësaj, kombi shqiptar “e ka ndier në mishin e tij” lemerinë e përjashtimit nga Evropa, sepse strategjia e ndjekur nga shovinistët fqinjë ishte paraqitja e shqiptarëve myslimanë si “mish i huaj” i Evropës dhe si rrezik për qytetërimin evropian (Kadare, 2006: 27, 17, 18).

Veçanërisht Kadareja në veprat e tij përfshin gjymtimet trupore për ndërtimin e pamjeve mizore, “barbare” e groteske nga historia e Perandorisë Osmane. Për shembull, në një roman ai përshkruan “koleksionistët” në ushtrinë osmane që vraponin pas betejës për të mbledhur pjesë nga trupat e armiqve të vrarë – dhëmbë, gishta, gërsheta, veshë, thonj apo vetulla – për t'ua shitur më pas të pasurve në qytete (Kadare, 1981[IV]: 46). Në një tregim, sulltani përpiqet të shrrënjosë efektet e dëmshme të syve të këqij me anë të një fushate të verbimit të detyruar apo vullnetar të atyre që dyshohen apo denoncohen se kanë sy të keq (Kadare, 1991: 316-362). Me anë të këtij varianti letrar të gjuetisë së dikurshme të shtrigave dhe të shpikjes së pareshtur të “armiqve të popullit”, Kadareja na tërheq vëmendjen te atmosfera terrorizuese që shtetet diktatoriale dhe totalitare janë të detyruara të krijojnë për t'u mbajtur në këmbë. Një tjetër episod nga romani *Kështjella* është tregues shumë i mirë i mënyrës se si Kadareja përmes gjymtimit të trupit njerëzor përcjell te lexuesi “barbarinë” e injorancën orientale dhe njëkohësisht na ka ofruar një arsye të rëndësishme pse Perandoria Osmane mbeti mbrapa zhvillimit material dhe

shkencor të Perëndimit. Episodi në fjalë është i ndërtuar rreth masakrimit të një mekaniku të artilerisë prej një grupi jeniçerësh. Mekaniku kishte llogaritur gabim trajektoren e gjyles së topit dhe kjo e fundit, në vend që të godiste bedenat e kështjellës arbërore, ra mbi jeniçerët që po i ngjiteshin murit. Jeniçerët e zemëruar për vrasjen dhe plagosjen e shokëve të tyre dhe për dështimin e sulmit mbi kështjellë bëjnë vetëgjyqësi, jo vetëm duke e vrarë teknikun e shkretë, por edhe duke ia shfityruar trupin. Një shfryrje e tillë nuk ishte e lidhur vetëm me hakmarrjen, por buronte nga një gjendje psikologjike e caktuar që na e zbulon shkrimtari në citatin e mëposhtëm:

Kur u afruan fare pranë, ndërsa po kërkonin me sy trupin e të ekzekutuarit, ata panë disa xhenjerë që po hidhnin diçka me lopata në një tezgë. Kjo diçka nuk ishte as trup, as gjymtyrë, as copa gjymtyrësh. Ishte diçka e përzier midis dheut, mishit, kockave dhe gurishteve të vogla, të bëra njësh nga furia e papërmbajtur e jataganëve dhe e sëpatave... Ca jeniçerë, që kishin mbetur atje, vështronin të hutuar dy funksionarët e lartë. Ishin, me siguri, nga ata që kishin marrë pjesë në masakër.... Pak kohë më parë ata kishin qëlluar mbi mekanikun me gjithë urrejtjen dhe njëkohësisht frikën që ndienin nga enigma e diturisë, e cila i tiranizonte shpirtrat e tyre. Duke e grirë copa-copa mekanikun, ata kujtonin se mund të çliroheshin nga kjo frikë e së panjohurës së tmerrshme. Ata në të vërtetë do të çliroheshin përkohësisht prej saj, gjersa ajo të mblidhej përsëri pikë-pikë në ndërgjegjen e tyre dhe të fillonte t'i tiranizonte përsëri. (Kadare, 1981[IV: 199-200).

Krahas shembujve të mësipërm, në pjesët e mëposhtme të artikullit tonë do të shohim në mënyrë më sistematike se si Kadareja i vë trupat në lidhje me pushtetin politik, për të përcjellë te lexuesit kuptime më të përgjithshme mbi marrëdhëniet e shqiptarëve me Perandorinë Osmane dhe me Orientin në përgjithësi. Hulumtimi ynë zhvillohet sipas nëntemave mbi aspektet fizike dhe kulturore të trupit: (1) veshja dhe sundimi oriental, (2) spektakli i kokave të prera, (3) kontrolli shtetëror mbi gjumin dhe ëndrrat, (4) trupëzimi i shpirtit oriental dhe (5) marrëdhënia midis homoseksualitetit e robërisë politike. Nuk pretendojmë që me këtë artikull ta kemi shteruar temën e politikës së trupave në veprën e Kadaresë, prandaj orvatja jonë është një ndihmesë modeste në këtë drejtim.

### Veshja dhe sundimi oriental

Veshja që mbulon plotësisht apo pjesërisht trupin shihet shpeshherë si zgjatim i personit që e mban. Ajo na paraqet jo vetëm imazhin fizik që ai ose ajo kërkon t'u tregojë të tjerëve, por edhe shijet, humorin, personalitetin, pozitën socio-ekonomike e ndonjëherë edhe bindjet politike. Veçanti të veshjes mund të tregojnë edhe përkatësinë e individit në grupe të mëdha etnike apo fetare, siç mund të jetë p.sh. plisi i bardhë një tipar dallues etnografik i shqiptarëve. Në disa prej veprave të tij, Kadareja dallimet në rrobat shqiptare dhe turke i paraqet si tregues të cilësive të ndryshme që kanë popujt përkatës. Te romani *Ura me tri harqe* ndeshim takimet e para imagjinare të shqiptarëve me turqit në shek. XIV, kohë kur Perandoria Osmane po shtrihej në gadishullin e Ballkanit. Një nga personazhet e veprës, murgu arbër Gjoni, na jep një përshkrim të teshave, lëvizjeve trupore dhe fizionomisë së turqve që ka takuar:

Këngët e tyre të zvarguara, me një rënim gjumi midis, dëgjohen shpesh e më shpesh kudo. Sjelljet e tyre, ecja e lehtë, lëvizjet e tyre brenda veshjeve të gjera, që duket sikur janë bërë enkas për të fshehur gjendjen e gjymtyrëve, dhe sidomos gjuha e tyre, fjalët e së cilës, në kundërshtim me përgjumjen e këngëve, mbarojnë në fund me një si goditje tokmaku, të gjitha këto mua më ngjallin një shqetësim të turbullt. Dhe ky shqetësim më shndërrohet në një lloj tmerri, ku mendoj se këta njerëz fshehin shumë gjëra. Pas buzëqeshjes dhe mirësjelljes së tyre ka diçka tinëzare. Jo më kot në veshjet e tyre të mëndafshta, në çallmat, në shallvaret dhe në xhybet e tyre nuk ka vija të drejta, kënde, thyerje ose kthesa. Çdo gjë është e papërcaktuar dhe e bërë në një mënyrë të atillë, që të ndërrojë formë vazhdimisht. Pas një veshjeje të tillë të vagëlluar është vështirë të dallosh krahun që mban një thikë nga krahun që mban një lule. Por, në fund të fundit, si mund të presësh çiltërsi nga një komb që fsheh burimin e vet: gratë (Kadare, 1981[VIII]: 158).

Në një vepër tjetër është një personazh turk ai që tronditet nga petku kombëtar i shqiptarit. Tregimi "Komisioni i festës" është i bazuar te një ngjarje e vërtetë, Masakrën e Manastirit të vitit 1830, ku me pabesi u vranë qindra krerë të kryengritësve të Shqipërisë së Jugut, të cilëve u ishte premtuar falja nga sulltani. Te tregimi i Kadaresë, ne njihemi me personazhin e Nuh Efendiut, një zyrtar osman i ngarkuar për përgatitjen e ceremonisë



dhe banketit për nder të krerëve shqiptarë. Kur ai sheh hyrjen e këtyre të fundit në qytet, aq shumë habitet e tronditet nga rrobat e tyre, sidomos nga fustanellat e bardha, sa që më pas e ka thujtë të pamundur të fletë. Të paktën karakteristik kombëtar ai ka vërejtur vetë natyrën rebele të shqiptarëve:

Veshjet e shqiptarëve e kishin rebelimin në çdo mëngë e në çdo tegel të tyre, për të mos zënë ngoje palat e fustanellave, që dukej sikur u frynin njëra-tjetrës si dallgë deti, dhe sidomos ato xhufka të kuqe mbi opinga, me të cilat dukej sikur ata do t'i vinin zjarrin perandorisë (Kadare, 1981[XI]: 281).

Nuh Efendiu mendon se sado kokëfortë të jenë shqiptarët, ata sidoqoftë do të dukeshin më pak kërcënueshëm po të vishnin xhybet e mëndafshita të zyrtarëve osmanë, me trajta dhe ngjyra gjumëndjellëse. Vetëm tani e kupton ai arsyen pse sulltani kishte punësuar specialistë të veshjeve enkas për të thjeshtuar dhe fshirë veshjet kombëtare të popujve të shumtë të perandorisë (po aty).

Velloja është pjesë e veshjes islamike për gratë dhe ndoshta përbën aspektin më të dukshëm dhe më të diskutueshëm të ndarjes dhe dominimit gjinor në shoqëritë islamike. Në Perëndim rëndom merret si provë e inferioritetit të shoqërive islamike përballë atyre perëndimore. Njëkohësisht, velloja e fytyrës apo ferexheja, së bashku me haremin, kanë qenë në qendër të fantazive erotike perëndimore për trupat e grave orientale. Edhe në prozën e Kadaresë, ferexheja është simbol i “despotizmit oriental” të meshkujve mbi femrat dhe i ndarjes gjeopolitike midis Evropës – kontinenti i lirisë dhe i dashurisë – dhe Orientit, aty ku feja ka fshirë si lirinë po ashtu edhe dashurinë romantike. Një nga kontrastet e tilla është ai që e gjejmë në romanin *Kështjella*, në njërën anë, midis grave të lira shqiptare që qëndrojnë përkrah burrave në bedenat e kështjellës dhe, në anën tjetër, sklaveve të haremit të komandantit të ushtrisë turke. Një sheh, për të nderur ushtarët turq para sulmit, u shpjegon edhe politikën që do të ndjekin osmanët për të nënshtruar gratë shqiptare pasi të ketë përfunduar lufta.

Grave dhe vajzave të tyre do t'iu heqim veshjet e bardha e të paturpshme dhe t'u veshim rrobën e zezë e fisnike, të bekuar nga feja. Ne do t'ua mbulojmë me perçe fytyrat dhe sytë e tyre dinakë, me të cilat ato, gjer tani shikohen lirisht me meshkujt. Ne do të bëjmë që ato të harrojnë tërbimin e dashurisë dhe të martohen me meshkujt sipas ligjeve të shenjtë të sheriatit. Ne do të

bëjmë që ato të ulin kokat e tyre rebele nën pushtetin e burrit, ashtu siç thotë Kurani i shenjtë (Kadare, 1981[IV]: 49-50).

Nga një tjetër vepër e Kadaresë, “Sjellësi i fatkeqësisë”, mësojmë se shumë vite më vonë, kur Shqipëria dhe Ballkani janë bërë pjesë e Perandorisë Osmane, më në fund del dekreti sulltanor për ferexhetë që do të dërgohen nga qendra e perandorisë në pjesën evropiane të saj për të mbuluar gratë e asaj ane. Karvanari Haxhi Mileti ngarkon mushkat e tij me gjysmë milion ferexhe dhe merr rrugën drejt perëndimit. Ai është një turk i zakonshëm, një mysliman i devotshëm, bashkëshort e baba, si edhe një funksionar tipik që kërkon të kryejë sa më mirë detyrën që i është caktuar. Është hera e parë që udhëton në pjesën evropiane të shtetit, aty ku xhamitë e reja qëndrojnë pranë kishave të vjetra. Ai arrin diku në Ballkan ku ndodhen fshatra të përzier greke dhe shqiptare dhe ndal për ujë në një burim pranë rrugës. Gjithçka deri atëherë i është dukur e zakonshme, derisa sytë i dallojnë një grup grash dhe vajzash që po mbushin ujë në burim. Është hera e parë që sheh gra pa ferexhe, me qafa, këmbë dhe sy të pambuluar. Në ato çaste gjithçka ndryshon në botëkuptimin e tij.

Sy grash e vajzash. S’ ishte mësuar me këtë dhe e ndiente që nuk e përballonte dot. Bota dukej ndryshe me to. Ishte njëlloj si të gdhieshe një mëngjes e ta gjeje botën me dy diej. Po, ishte tamam ashtu: një diell i madh, ai që njohim, dhe një tjetër i grimcuar në mijëra e mijëra copa, shpërndarë si çifte margaritarësh mbi balle grash [...] Allah, psherëtiu ai. Kishte ditë me diell e net me hënë por kishte edhe një gjë tjetër: ditë me sy grash. Ishte e para ditë e tillë në jetën e tij... Do të kishte edhe ca të tjera, njëzet, tridhjetë, aq sa të zgjaste ky udhëtim dhe pastaj rruga e kthimit dhe pas saj asgjë... do të binte nata (Kadare, 1986: 135-136).

Duke mos e folur gjuhën e grave, Haxhi Mileti mund të komunikojë me to vetëm me sy dhe gjepte, ato e kuptojnë dhe ia hapin rrugën për të burimi, madje një grua e re i ofron edhe bucelën e saj për të pirë. Për aq sa zgjat ky komunikim pa fjalë, ai sheh gratë dhe e ndjen se edhe ato po e shohin atë. Në këtë shkëmbim vështrimesh ai zbulon bukurinë femërore dhe bie në dashuri për herën e parë në jetë. Aty ai e kupton se realizimi i urdhrit të sulltanit për t’i mbuluar gratë evropiane me ferexhetë që po i sillte ai, do të ishte një kob i vërtetë. Gjatë rrugës së kthimit drejt lindjes për në qendrën e perandorisë, atij

i duket se prania e grave në vende publike është rralluar dhe e merr me mend se ka filluar zbatimi i dekretit. Haxhi Mileti ndjehet përgjegjës për mynxyrën që u solli grave të anës evropiane të shtetit osman: “Bota iu duk e ftohtë dhe e hirtosur si pas një eklipsi [...] Kishte pasur eklips të diellit e eklips të hënës dhe tani po ndodhte i treti eklips, ai i grave” (po aty: 150-151). Kur kalon pranë të njëjtit burim dhe nuk i sheh gratë, bota i duket e shkretë dhe ai ngashërehet. Në çastin kur ai rimerr udhëtimin, shpirti i Haxhi Mileti është rebeluar ndaj dekretit, botës orientale dhe ndaj vetë trupit të tij që mekanikisht vijon udhën në drejtim të kryeqytetit.

Karvani vazhdonte të ecte drejt lindjes. Mbretëria e grave kishte mbetur pas. Këndeje e tutje ishte bota e ferexhesë shekullore. As gra të zbuluara dhe as mendime trazuese s’kishte më. Vetëm ai po hynte si *mish i huaj* në të. Zoti më ruajtë, tha dy-tri herë me vete. Pastaj mendimet iu çakërdisën përsëri sikur t’i frynte një erë e marrë. Solli ndërmend gjithçka kishte parë e dëgjuar gjatë asaj periudhe të fundit të jetës së tij dhe befas thirri gati me zë: Mbuloje diellin e hënën, padishah, mbuloji yjet dhe detin, vetëm ato mos i mbulo (po aty: 152; kursivi ynë).

Ai e mallkon dekretin, për zbatimin e të cilin kishte qenë një instrument i verbër. Duke e parë turbullimin e Haxhi Miletit, agjentët sekretë të shtetit kuptojnë se diçka ka shkuar gabim në misionin e tij dhe e arrestojnë me të mbërritur në stacionin e karvanëve pranë kryeqytetit. Ai torturohet, por nuk tregon asgjë për krimin që supozohet se ka kryer, derisa një ditë e gjejnë të vdekur në qeli, me fytyrën e mbuluar nga një shami të lidhur ashtu sikurse gratë lidhin ferexhenë.

Intensiteti emocional i tregimit “Sjellësi i fatkeqësisë” ndërtohet mbi kundërshtitë binare Evropa përkundër Orientit, dita përkundër natës, drita përkundër errësirës, liria përkundër robërisë etj. Sytë e grave krahasohen me diellin, burimin e jetës mbi tokë dhe ferexheja krahasohet me eklipsin. Dashuria është e pamundur pa tërheqjen fizike, pa e parë gjininë tjetër dhe pa u parë prej saj. Fytyrat, sytë, flokët dhe trajtat e trupit të grave në Orient nuk shihen në publik dhe prandaj liria e dashuria nuk janë të mundura atje, ndryshe nga sa ndodh në Evropë, madje edhe në pjesën osmane të Evropës. Dallimi shpjegon pse Haxhi Mileti zbuloi gratë, dashurinë dhe vetë gëzimin e jetës në pjesën evropiane, e cila, edhe pse nën të njëjtin sundimtar, kishte mbetur ndryshe nga pjesa aziatike dhe origjinale e perandorisë.

Pas rënies së komunizmit, duke marrë mbi supe misionin e ndërmjetësimit midis “Evropës” dhe Shqipërisë, Kadare i ka nxitur bashkëkombasit që t’u ngjajnë sa më shumë evropianëve, sepse paragjykime të fuqishme ekzistojnë në Evropë ndaj atyre që duken si joevropianë. Në një shkrim në shtyp ai thotë:

Evropianët, pavarësisht se nuk e pranojnë haptas, nuk i duan popujt që, duke qenë në Evropë, nuk u ngjajnë atyre. Ata gjithmonë e më tepër acarohen nga shenjat dalluese, veshjet e zakonet që vijnë nga kontinente të tjera, kryesisht nga Lindja e Mesme... Identiteti shqiptar jo vetëm që nuk është acarues, por është tërheqës për Europën. Këtu është fjala për një keqkuptim, për një ngatërresë me shenja të kontinenteve të tjera, Afrikë dhe Azi, që kanë depërtuar në Ballkan... janë shenja të tjera të kontinenteve të tjera, që për evropianët ngjajnë të huaja e shqetësuese... nuk është identiteti shqiptar, por braktisja e tij, pengesa për integrimin. Braktisja nis me veshje joshqiptare... për të përfunduar në rastet më të skajshme, me braktisjen e gjuhës shqipe, që zëvendësohet me turqishten (Kadare, 2004).

Edhe në esenë *Identiteti evropian i shqiptarëve* Kadareja i paralajmëron shqiptarët që të mos e marrin lehtë dukjen e jashtme në marrëdhënie me “Evropën”, sepse qëllimi i armiqve të shqiptarëve ka qenë që t’i paraqesë shqiptarët si të huaj dhe joevropianë në sytë e “Evropës”. Elita sunduese e ish-Jugosllavisë bënte ç’ ishte e mundur që shqiptarët në këtë shtet të dukeshin si orientalë në veshje e zakone, në mënyrë që kur të vinte ora e spastrimit të tyre t’i thoshte “Evropës” se po i përzinte për të shpëtuar qytetërimin evropian nga rreziku islamik (Kadare, 2006: 42-43). Megjithëse Kadareja shkruan se Perëndimi nuk ra në këtë grackë dhe erdhi në ndihmë të shqiptarëve në vitin 1999, ai duket se i pranon si të natyrshme paragjykimet evropiane ndaj ngjyrës së lëkurës, veshjeve dhe sjelljes së joevropianëve. Ai i atribuon një status sovran vështirimit të Zonjës Evropë, nën të cilin shqiptarët duhet të bëjnë kujdes me pamjen e jashtme dhe rrobat e tyre që të jenë brenda normës evropiane dhe të mos ngjasojnë aspak me aziatikët dhe afrikanët, në mënyrë që ajo të mos i nxjerrë prej shtëpisë së saj si të padëshiruar. Me fjalë të tjera, shqiptarëve u duhet të kurojnë imazhin e tyre para “Evropës” që të pranohen në të.

### Spektakli i kokave të prera

*Pashallëqet e mëdha* është ndoshta vepra e Kadaresë ku grotesku gjen përdorimin më të gjerë. Edhe në këtë roman Kadareja e ka ndërtuar rreth një dukurie të vërtetë historike, kësaj radhe rreth kokave të armiqve dhe të rebelëve që osmanët i dërgonin si trofe në Stamboll. Mbi ritualin e paraqitjes së kokave të prera në qendër të perandorisë, Kadareja ka krijuar një sërë simbolesh që përcjellin kumte politike në të tashmen. Romani i tij hapet me përshkrimin e sheshit kryesor të Perandorisë Osmane, të rrethuar nga ndërtesat dhe monumentet shtetërore, krahas të cilëve ndodhet edhe “kamarja e turpit”, në të cilën vendosen kokat e prera. Pozicionimi i saj është gjetur enkas për të kapur vështrimin e kalimtarëve dhe për ta bërë secilin nga ata që me mendje të ballafaqojë veten me shtetin.

Ndoshta asgjekund tjetër syri i kalimtarit nuk do të mund të kapte kaq lehtësisht raportin që krijohej midis statizmit të rëndë të sheshit shekullor perandorak dhe kokës së prerë njerëzore, që kishte dashur ta sfidonte atë. Dukej menjëherë se zgjedhja e vendit të kamares në mur ishte bërë në mënyrë të tillë, që të krijonte përshtypjen se sytë e shuar të kokës shikonin të gjitha objektet e sheshit. Në këtë mënyrë ishte llogaritur që edhe kalimtarit më me pak fantazi, qoftë edhe për një grimë, t’i shkonte nëpër mend ta përfytyronte kokën e vet të vendosur në atë lartësi të panatyrshme, pak më të madhe se shtati i njeriut në këmbë, por më të ulët se koka e njeriut mbi kalë (Kadare, 1989: 8).

Koka është pjesa e trupit që më shumë e dallon një individ nga një tjetër. Ajo përmban trurin dhe shumicën e organeve shqisore dhe çmohet si vendndodhja e arsyes, ndryshe nga zemra që mbahet si vendndodhja e emocioneve. Kokat e shkëputura nga trupat e atyre që kishin guxuar të sfidonin pushtetin qendror, u kujtojnë shikuesve pafuqinë e tyre përballë makinerisë shtetërore: vlera e tyre si individë është e papërfillshme. Nëse tenton të dallohesh mbi turmën dhe të fillosh të mendosh me kokën tënde, mund ta humbësh atë. Nuk ka rëndësi nëse i shërben shtetit apo i kundërvihesh atij, është spikatja e individualitetit ajo që duhet shtypur me çdo mënyrë. Kokat e dy prej njerëzve me pozitë të lartë në shtet përfundojnë po njëlloj te kamarja e turpit, pavarësisht se Ali Pasha Tepelena ishte kryengritës, ndërsa Hurshid pasha ishte komandanti i ushtrisë perandorake që shtypi kryengritjen e parit.

Kamarja e turpit i lidh fatet e personazheve të romanit. Kështu, Hurshid pasha e di se kamarja nuk do të rrijë e zbrazët për një kohë të gjatë dhe se nëse koka e Ali Pashait nuk shkon aty do të jetë koka e atij vetë që do ta zëvendësojë. Edhe në ëndrra atij i shfaqet lufta e shtetit osman me kryengritësin shqiptar si beteja midis dy kokave për t'i shpëtuar kamares. Ai është kaq i terrorizuar nga mendimi se koka e tij e prerë mund të përfundojë në kamare, sa që para vetëvrasjes e lë në testament që të varroset shumë thellë në tokë. Por më kot, sepse korrieri i kokave, Tunxh Hatai ia hap varrin dhe ia shkëput kokën kufomës së Hurshid pashait (po aty: 148).

Abdullai është një nëpunës i ngarkuar me vëzhgimin e kokave të vendosura në kamare. Nëse sheh shenja të dekompozimit apo të tjera ai duhet menjëherë të lajmërojë mjekun e caktuar për shëndetin e kokave të prera. Abdullai është krenar për punën e tij dhe i kthen kontrolllet rutinë të kokave në një shfaqje për publikun, por thellë në shpirt ai është xheloz për kokat që marrin tërë vëmendjen e njerëzve. Gjithashtu Abdullain e torturon një sekret i jetës private: nuk ka shumë që është martuar, por nuk është i aftë të kryejë marrëdhënie seksuale me nusen. Ai ia thotë problemin mikut mjek që kujdeset për kokat dhe ky i përgjigjet se është një disfunktion i përkohshëm i trupit, goxha i përhapur te burrat turq për shkak të mungesës së elementit femëror në jetën publike. Jetët e ndara të të dyja gjinive para martesës e kthejnë femrën në një qenie mistike në psikologjinë e burrave dhe instinktet e tyre të shtypura e pengojnë kryerjen e aktit seksual (po aty: 72). Frustimi i Abdullait rritet sidomos gjatë Netëve të Fuqisë, gjatë të cilave, sipas një tradite të vjetër, sulltani fle me një virgjëreshë. Në këto raste, kryeqyteti mbushet me dritat e festimeve dhe topat gjëmojnë për të simbolizuar fuqinë e sovranit dhe të shtetit. Në një Natë të Fuqisë, Abdullai i dëgjoj të shtënat e topit pas përpjekjes së dështuar për të kryer marrëdhënie me të shoqen: “Nën atë gjëmim që dridhte botën, nëpunësi Abdulla zvarritej si një kërmill” (po aty: 73). Për shkak të frustimit psikologjik që trupi nuk i përgjigjet kokës së tij dhe që organet e trupit po e tradhëtojnë, Abdullai ia ka zili kokëve të pashallarëve në kamare për numrin e madh të grave që kanë pasur në jetë. Prandaj Abdullai në një fazë çmendurie kërkon që edhe ai të bëhet kokë, në mënyrë që nusja të mos presë prej tij gjë tjetër veç puthjeve dhe që ai të mos ketë më turp prej saj. Ai dëshiron të jetë një kokë në kamare për të qenë në qendër të vëmendjes së turmës së vizitorëve dhe të terrorizojë sheshin. Për të qenë një subjekt kryelartë, që ta meritojë kamaren, atij i duhet të ngrejë krye ndaj shtetit, prandaj fillon të shajë e të mallkojë sovranin. Mirëpo, shteti ka

dënime të tjera për rebelë të vegjël si ai: Abdullain e mbysin me tel dhe trupin ia hedhin në një kënetë në dalje të qytetit.

Personazhet Haxhi Mileti dhe Abdullai kanë disa ngjashmëri me njëri-tjetrin. Të dy janë nëpunës të bindur dhe krenarë të burokracisë osmane, dy dhëmbëza të vegjël në makinerinë e madhe të shtetit. Të dy jetojnë jetët e tyre të zakonshme dhe e marrin për të mirëqenë shoqërinë orientale ku bëjnë pjesë, me frikën e përhershme ndaj shtetit dhe me ndarjen gjinore në publik, deri në çastin kur diçka intime i prek, në shpirt dhe trup. Haxhi Mileti e përjeton dashurinë romantike kur sheh për herë të parë lëkurën e bardhë, flokët e çelët dhe sytë e grave të pambuluara në pjesën evropiane të perandorisë. Abdullai në qendër të perandorisë, jeton përditë me spektaklin e terrorit shtetëror dhe ndoshta kjo e fruston në jetën private. Të dy arrijnë që ta lidhin situatën e tyre private dhe intime me sistemin politik ku jetojnë dhe që të dy ngrenë krye, për t'u shtypur më pas nga pesha e stërmadhe e shtetit. Mirëpo, nëse Haxhi Mileti papritur ndërgjegjësohet për tiraninë e panatyrshme të shtetit dhe në heshtje rebelohet deri në fund të jetës ndaj vendimit të sulltanit, në krahun tjetër Abdullai me veprimet e veta të marra e pohon terrorin, kërkon të jetë vetë spektakël i terrorit dhe protesta e tij e zhurmshme mbetet ajo e një personi që nuk e ka kokën në vend. Sytë e Haxhi Miletit hapen në fund të jetës, kurse Abdullai mbetet i verbër deri në fund.

Një personazh tjetër i romanit *Pashallëqet e mëdha* është Tunxh Hatai, balsamosësi i kokave dhe transportuesi i tyre nga vendi i ekzekutimit për në kryeqytet. Ai është një nëpunës i nivelit të mesëm që i ka zili zyrtarët më të lartë të shtetit e dëshiron që një ditë t'ua çojë kokat në kamaren e turpit. Gjatë misioneve të tij në krahina të ndryshme, ai ua tregon kokat banorëve të fshatrave në këmbim të parave. Këto janë zona të asimiluara, banorët e të cilave kanë humbur kujtesën kolektive, kulturën e madje edhe gjuha e mendimi po u atrofizohen gradualisht. Shfaqjet e herëpashershme të kokave nga ana e Tuxh Hatait janë ngjarja e vetme që u ngjall ndopak emocion atyre njerëzve dhe që i shkëput nga apatia e përgjithshme. Pamja e kokave të prera është për ta frikë, mahnitje, zbavitje, mësim madje edhe dashuri. Kokat në vetvete, organe të ndara nga trupat e tyre, u ngjallin vegime të zbehta të mendimeve, ideve e kujtimeve. Dalëngadalë kokat e prera “u bënë njëfare pike, ku filluan të lidheshin fijet e jetës së tyre. Ato u bënë numra, shenja, sinore dhe, në fund, një lloj kalendari. Ngjarjet filluan të vireshin në raport me to...” (po aty: 157-158). Ato, si nyje që lidhin belbëzimet në ligjërimi, po u kujtonin njerëzve edhe kulturën e tyre etnike të dikurshme. Padashur,

Tunxh Hatai në punën e tij të dytë si menaxher spektakli, kishte prekur tek ta grimca të kujtesës kolektive, por që prapëseprapë nuk ishin të mjaftueshme që ata të rigjenin kulturat e tyre të humbura.

Si një kanxhë e lëshuar në thellësi të një pusi, koka e prerë endej mbi gjithçka të vdekur dhe të mbytur prej kohësh, në nënshtrësata e ndërgjegjes së tyre kolektive, balada të thara, këngë heroike të mbuluara nga ndryshku, stinë të dikurshme luftërash. Ajo, sa i prekte ato, vërtetonte praninë e tyre të zezë atje poshtë, por kurrësi s' ishte e aftë të kapte e të ngrinte ndonjërin prej tyre lart (po aty: 158-159).

Kadareja paralajmëron se çfarë fati i pret vendet e popujt e nënshtruar të perandorisë, prandaj vepra e tij është një elozh i mosnënshtrimit edhe kryengritjes, që i bën jehonë edhe situatës politike të Shqipërisë kryeneçe ndaj dy kampeve të mëdha të Luftës së Ftohtë. Pas rënies së komunizmit, autori ka pohuar se gjatë shkrimit të romanit ai është ndikuar edhe nga atmosfera e terrorit që mbizotëronte në Shqipërinë komuniste. Pavarësisht alegorive me periudha të mëvonshme historike nuk duhet harruar se, së bashku me *Nëpunësin e pallatit të ëndrrave*, romani *Pashallëqet e mëdha* është produkt i imagjinatës së Kadaresë për natyrën apo thelbin e Perandorisë Osmane dhe Orientit në përgjithësi.

### **Kontrolli shtetëror mbi gjumin dhe ëndrrat**

Gjumi është një nevojë fiziologjike dhe funksion themelor i trupit të njeriut. Ngaqë përfshin një humbje të pjesshme të vetëdijes dhe një veçim të përkohshëm nga realiteti dhe bota që na rrethon, gjumi është krahasuar me vdekjen dhe vdekja shpesh cilësohet si “gjumë i përjetshëm”. Gjumi e përgjumja përdoren si metaforë për humbjen e gjallërisë së një kombi, për rënien e tij në qetësi dhe harresë, prandaj lëvizjet nacionaliste kërkojnë “rizgjimin” e tij. Siç e kemi parë më sipër, në disa romane të Kadaresë, gjumi dhe përgjumja lidhet me dorëzimin dhe pranimin e dominimit, me humbjen e subjektivitetit dhe të vetëdijes kombëtare, ndërsa qenia zgjuar (ndonjëherë edhe pagjumësia) lidhen me qëndresën dhe trazimin politik. Në romanin *Nëpunësi i Pallatit të Ëndrrave* shpjegohet se për shtetin osman, gjumi i popujve të nënshtruar është diçka e mirë, ndërsa pagjumësia e tyre është shenjë e kryengritjeve të ardhshme, prandaj nëpunësit e Pallatit të Ëndrrave



masin sasinë e gjumit të popujve, për të marrë masat e duhura nëse niveli i gjumit bie nën normalen (po aty: 209).

Në pajtim me stereotipin e njohur orientalist mbi aziatikët letargjikë dhe fatalistë, Kadareja e paraqet përgjumjen si një tipar, madje virtyt, të aziatikëve, përkundër gjallërisë dhe shqetësimit të pareshtur që karakterizon evropianët. Më sipër pamë se përgjumjen e krijon edhe pamja e veshjeve turko-osmane, ndërsa në citatin e mëposhtëm të shkëputur nga tregimi “Lamtumira e së keqes” është një zyrtar i lartë osman ai që lavdëron sistemin despotik të qeverisjes dhe përgjumjen:

Unë jam një aziatik i thellë. Qysh në rini i kam urryer për vdekje Evropën dhe evropianët. I kam urryer qytetet dhe gratë e tyre, kishat, kafenetë, gazetatat, babëzinë për të marrë vesh çdo gjë, votimet, parlamentet, logjikën e tyre të ftohtë, mënyrën si ecin, si vishen, si arsyetojnë, shpirtin e tyre, kundërshtues, polemist, krenarinë, trazimin e përhershëm, gjithçka që ka të bëjë me atë që ata i quajnë “të drejta të njeriut” dhe që në të vërtetë s’janë veçse demoni i tij gjumëprishës. I urrej pra të gjitha këto, në kohën që më digjet shpirti për përgjumjen e bekuar të Anadollit, për stepën gjysmë të zhveshur që s’ka fund, mbi qytetet, fshatrat e qiellin e së cilës sundon vetëm një njeri prej të cilit varet fati yt, me mijëra fije të lidhura në mister dhe ti vetë nuk e di nga mund të të vijë e mira ose e keqja, ngritja ose rrënimi, se gjithçka i ka rrënjët gjysmë në jetë, gjysmë në ëndërr, gjë që ty të çliron plotësisht nga trazimet, dilemat, sepse asnjëherë nuk kërkon të zbulosh shkaqet e gjërave dhe kështu i përgjumur siç vjen, ashtu edhe ikën nga kjo botë, pa u zgjuar kurrë plotësisht... (Kadare, 1991: 109-110).

Shteti osman dëshiron t’i verë popujt në gjumë, por ai i druhet edhe gjumit të tyre. Gjatë gjumit, përkohësisht të shkëputur nga telashet e përditshme dhe mbikëqyrja e shtetit, njerëzit ëndërrojnë dhe prandaj ëndrrat mund të shihen si kështjella e fundit që i ka mbetur lirisë së subjekteve njerëzore. Nga romani *Nëpunësi i Pallatit të Ëndrrave* mësojmë se shteti osman ka zhvilluar mekanizmat e posaçëm për ta mposhtur kështjellën e fundit. Qëllimi i Pallatit të Ëndrrave është mbledhja dhe interpretimi i ëndrrave për të gjetur në to paralajmërime për destabilizime të mundshme politike.

Këtu më mirë se nga çdo studim, procesverbal, raport inspektorësh, relacion policie apo guvernatorësh të pashallëqeve, kuptohet gjendja e vërtetë

e perandorisë. Sepse, në kontinentin e përnatshëm të gjumit gjendet drita dhe terri i njerëzimit, mjalti dhe helmi, madhështia dhe mjerimi i tij. Gjithçka që është e turbullt dhe e rrezikshme, apo që do të bëhet e tillë pas disa vjetësh apo pas disa shekujsh, e jep shenjën e parë në ëndrrën e njeriut. Asnjë pasion apo mendim i mbrapshtë, rrebesh apo katastrofë, rebelim apo krim nuk është e mundur të mos dërgojë hijen e vet shumë kohë më parë se të shfaqet ai vetë në botë. (Kadare, 1989: 189).

Në dukje, mekanizmi është i thjeshtë, si edhe për çështje të tjera me të cilat merret burokracia e shtetit: nënshtetasit ftohen që të dorëzojnë vullnetarisht ëndrrat e tyre te filialet e Pallatit në çdo anë të perandorisë dhe ata e bëjnë këtë sepse secili shpreson se ëndrra e tij do të jetë ajo që do të zgjidhet si bashëndrra që i paraqitet sulltanit një herë një javë. Nëse bashëndrra parandalon një fatkeqësi apo sulm ndaj shtetit, atëherë edhe jeta e ëndërruesit të saj do të ndryshojë sa hap e mbyll sytë, ai do të nderohet nga shteti dhe do të martohet me një nga mbesat e sulltanit. Megjithatë, ajo që lexojmë në faqet e romanit është se një ëndërrues i bashëndrrës i nënshtrohet hetimit, torturës dhe përfundon i vdekur në duart e shtetit që kërkon të kontrollojë të pakontrollueshmen. Për më tepër mësojmë se disa nga ëndrrat janë “të pavërteta”, që do të thotë se janë të shpikura nga burokracia e korruptuar e Pallatit, si pjesë e luftës për pushtet midis fraksioneve kundërshtarë të elitës sunduese.

Pallati nuk refuzon ëndrrën e asnjërit, sepse të gjithë konsiderohen të barabartë në ëndrrat e tyre, pavarësisht prej pozitës në hierarkinë shoqërore. Premtimi për trajtimin e barabartë që do t’u bëhet ëndrrave të tyre, është një shtysë më shumë për nënshtetasit e perandorisë që t’ia besojnë shtetit mendimet, sekretet e dëshirat e tyre më të thella, që ia kanë fshehur edhe vetes. Siç e shpreh një nga personazhet e romanit, Pallati i Ëndrrave është “institucioni i vetëm në shtetin tonë, nëpërmjet të cilit pjesa e errët e ndërgjegjes së gjithë shtetasve krijon një kontakt të drejtpërdrejtë me shtetin” (po aty: 223). Me dorëzimin e ëndrrave, dorëzimi i vullneteve të individëve të shteti bëhet tërësor.

Ëndrrat janë edhe metafora për idetë e reja e të guximshme që e bëjnë botën të përparojë, por në roman është e qartë se shteti i mbledh dhe i interpreton ëndrrat kryesisht për arsye të sigurisë dhe me gjasë i përdor ato për të shënjestruar individë e grupe të caktuara për ushtrimin e dhunës parandaluese dhe terrorin. Për më tepër, fakti që vendimet më të rëndësishme

të shtetit merren mbi bazën e ogureve të nxjerra nga ëndrrat dhe jo mbi bazën e provave empirike dhe llogaritjes racionale, tregon në vetvete mënyrën se si operon shteti lindor. Pavarësisht prej sofistikimit burokratik, ndarjes racionale të punës në Pallat dhe zellit shkencor me të cilin nëpunësit e tij bëjnë punën e tyre, objektivi i përgjithshëm për të cilin është themeluar institucioni e bën gjithçka të duket e tmerrshme, obskurantiste dhe absurde. Kadareja ka shpjeguar se strukturën e Pallatit të Ëndrrave e ka modeluar sipas një bote të nëndheshme apo skëtërrës, që do t'i ngjante skëtërrave të tjera imagjinare që gjenden në letërsinë botërore, që nga egjiptianët dhe grekët e lashtë e deri te Shën Augustini apo Dantja (Kadare, 1990: 175-176). Megjithëse ai e ka vendosur Pallatin e Ëndrrave në Perandorinë Osmane, vepra është shkruar si alegori për diktaturat moderne, përfshirë atë komuniste, dhe lexuesi inteligjent në Shqipëri e kuptonte se autori po i shfaqte absurditetin e një aparati të stërmadh terrori shtetëror të ngritur mbi premtimin e lumturisë së ardhshme.

### **Një shpirt në kërkim të një trupi**

Termi “trupëzim” na kujton faktin se marrëdhëniet e subjektit me botën janë të ndërmjetësuara nga trupi i tij. Aftësitë tona njohëse, dija jonë mbi veten dhe të tjerët varet nga të pasurit e një trupi. Mbi këtë kuptim të parë të termit vendoset edhe përdorimi metaforik i “trupëzimit”: përfaqësimi i ideve të caktuara apo i shpirtit në trup apo në një trajtë materiale, apo dhënia e një trajte konkrete ideve abstrakte. Trupëzimi ndodhet në qendër të një tregimi të Kadaresë, i titulluar “Lamtumira e së keqes”, i shkruar në vitin 1987 dhe i botuar më 1991, në vitin e parë të pluralizmit politik në Shqipëri. Ndodhia e tregimit është vendosur në një qytet jugor të Shqipërisë në dhjetëvjeçarin e parë të shek. XX, pra disa vjet para shpalljes së pavarësisë së Shqipërisë nga Perandoria Osmane.

Pjesa kryesore e tregimit përbëhet nga dialogu midis dy personazheve: i pari, Beqir Aliu, është qeveritari osman i qytetit dhe personazhi i dytë është një vizitor i mistershëm që ka ardhur nga Stambolli. Kur ata takohen, është e dukshme për Beqir Aliun se bujtësi mban një pozitë të lartë në oborrin osman, por nuk ka aspak dijeni për misionin e tij. Miku është tepër i kursyer me fjalët dhe nga paraqitja duket se mundohet nga një brengë e madhe. Qeveritari shqetësohet se mos i dërguari nga qendra e pushtetit ka urdhër ta shkarkojë apo edhe ta dënojë atë, prandaj përpiqet me shumë mënyra për

të marrë vesh arsyen e udhëtimit të tij. Kur orvatja për ta ndjellë në bisedë dështon, atëherë Beqir Aliu e përgjon mikun ndërsa ky po lahej në banjë. Beqir Aliu është i bindur se “atë çka fshihnin sytë ose goja e nxirrte trupi lakuriq... Atje dilte ambicja dhe epshi, mëdyshja dhe gatishmëria për të mos u ndalur para asgjëje, tmerri i fshehtë, pendesa apo synimi për të shkelur mbi kufoma” (Kadare, 1991: 92). Mirëpo ai nuk arrin të nxjerrë asgjë nga vrojtimi i trupit të mikut, madje as parapëlqimet seksuale. Meraku për veten nuk e lë Beqir Aliun të dorëzohet dhe provon një tjetër grep për ta bërë mikun të flasë: seksin. Ai i dërgon në dhomën e gjumit një herë një vajzë e më pas një djalë, por bujtësi i refuzon të dy dhe rri në dhomë i zhytur në mendime të thella.

Pikërisht atëherë kur Beqir Ali ka humbur shpresën se do të mësojë misterin e mikut enigmatik, ky i fundit, i mundur nga pagjumësia, i kërkon që ta kalojnë natën duke biseduar dhe më në fund i tregon se cili është, si edhe qëllimin e ardhjes në qytetin jugor të Shqipërisë. Ai është një ideolog osman, një aziatik dhe një mysliman i devotshëm. Ai e urren deri në palcë Evropën dhe tani që po ndjehet se Shqipëria shumë shpejt do të shkëputet nga shteti osman dhe do të marrë rrugën e evropianizimit, bujtësin e mundon gjetja e një mënyre për ta mbajtur sërish këtë vend në orbitën e Orientit. Por brenga e tij më e thellë ka të bëjë me pyetjen nëse një ditë Orienti do të arrijë ta mposhtë përfundimisht Evropën. Shqipëria është një nga vendet më të lashta evropiane që u islamizua në një masë të madhe dhe, sipas tij, nuk ka përse ky eksperiment të mos përsëritet në të ardhmen në një shkallë më të gjerë. Mirëpo, për këtë nevojitet mbajtja e Shqipërisë të lidhur shpirtërisht me Orientin në rast se Perandoria Osmane është e detyruar të tërhiqet prej këtij vendi. Zgjidhja që ai ka gjetur është vazhdimi i aziatizimit të Shqipërisë së brendshme, dhe kjo mund të realizohet nëse udhëheqësi i ardhshëm politik i saj do të jetë një oriental në shpirt. Trupëzimi i frymës aziatike te një njeri i vetëm do të mundësojë jetësimin e projektit për të mbajtur Shqipërinë larg Evropës.

Një *hoxhë* në vend të princit, ja ç’i duhet këtij vendi, - vazhdoi tjetri. Kur Azia të tkurret, të bëhet sa një bërthamë, ashtu siç thonë se tkurret gjithësia në ciklet kozmike, kur Azia pra të tkurret, në këtë vend, ajo do të strehohet e gjitha, në qenien e tij. Le të rrënohen ligjet tona, skllavëria dhe minaretë, mjafton që ato të jenë në trurin e atij njeriu. Sepse do të vijë dita, kur ashtu siç bymehet prapë gjithësia e zvogëluar do të shpërthejë e do të bymehet gjithë Azia e tkurrur: prangat, ankthi, tirania. Nuk e di nëse më kuptove, Beqir Ali.

Në trurin e një njeriu dhe askund tjetër ne duhet të lemë bërthamën tonë (po aty: 113-114; kursivi ynë).

Disa shenja në tregim na japin të kuptojmë se biseda midis Beqir Aliut dhe mikut enigmatik ka ndodhur duke u gdhirë dita e datuar 16 tetor 1908, datëlindja e Enver Hoxhës. Po kështu titulli fetar i hoxhës në citatin e mësipërm, përveç se na bën të ditur mbiemrin e diktatorit të ardhshëm, na tregon edhe për një ndikim islamik në formimin e tij. Në këtë mënyrë, Kadareja na sugjeron se qenia dhe veprat e udhëheqësit komunist trupëzuan shpirtin oriental, islamik dhe kundërkristian të Perandorisë së rrënuar Osmane dhe se ky shpirt ishte rrënja e veçimit politik gjysmëshekullor të Shqipërisë nga Evropa.

Secili nga regjimet totalitare komuniste e përfytyronte shoqërinë e vet si një organizëm që duhet ushqyer dhe mbajtur shëndetshëm me anë të profilaksisë së drejtuar ndaj armiqve, të cilët shiheshin si parazitë, viruse apo kancerë të trupit politik. Mirëpo, vetë përvoja e komunizmit ishte një eksperiment në përqendrimin aq të madh të pushtetit në duart e një njeriu të vetëm – Stalini, Mao Ce Duni apo Enver Hoxha – sa që ky mund të thoshte me plot gojën: “Unë jam shoqëria” (Lefort, 1993: 93). Korrupsioni i mendjes dhe i trupit të këtij njeriu do të thoshte dekadencë për të gjithë shoqërinë. Në tregimin e Kadaresë, kanceri apo virusi i shoqërisë shqiptare është vetë trupi i udhëheqësit që, duke filluar në vitin 1908, do të rritej pareshtur, për të infektuar një ditë të gjithë shoqërinë. Ky është modeli i despotizmit oriental i reduktuar në biologjizëm: fryma aziatike e prurë nga Stambolli në një farë mënyre mbruhet në trupin e një foshnjeje, i cili, ndoshta pa e kuptuar as vetë është i destinuar për t’u bërë despoti dhe për t’i sjellë mynxyrën Shqipërisë.

### **Homoseksualiteti dhe robëria**

Disa prej udhëtarëve perëndimorë në Orient kanë vërejtur sjellje relativisht libertine për sa i përket marrëdhënieve homoseksuale, aq sa homoerotizmi u bë pjesë e përshkrimit ekzotik të Orientit dhe u përfshi nën rubrikën më të gjerë të shthurjes dhe natyrës epi-shore të orientalëve. Nën efektet e përshkrimeve të tilla, shumë homoseksuale perëndimorë ndërmerrnin udhëtime në Orient enkas për të përjetuar një seksualitet më të çlirët se sa ai i vendeve perëndimore. Megjithatë, disa orientalistë, si Riçard Bërton [Richard Burton] shkruanin se homoseksualiteti është një ves i natyrshëm në Lindje, ndërkohë që burrat në Perëndim ishin të paaftë që ta praktikonin (Boone, 1995: 91).

Lexuesit e këtij artikulli tashmë e kanë krijuar përshtypjen se homoseksualiteti në romanet e Kadaresë praktikohet kryesisht nga personazhe orientale. Duke komentuar mbi erosin në veprën e Kadaresë, kritiku Tefik Çausi vëren se “pederastinë shkrimtari e lidh me personazhe negative, njerëz të ndytë e perversë” (2004: 216). Një personazh i tillë është Kus Babai, në romanin *Viti i mbrapshtë*. Ai udhëheq fanatikët myslimanë që kundërshtojnë shpëputjen e Shqipërisë nga Perandoria Osmane. Çausi e përshkruan Kus Babain si “përfaqësues i atyre forcave që duan ta mbulojnë Shqipërinë me llum obskurantist anadollak” (1994: 190). Nga romani mësojmë se Kus Babai ka dashur veçanërisht njërin nga dashnorët e tij, Vasillaqin, dhe se nuk ka gjetur më preheje që nga dita e zezë që Vasillaqin e vranë për shkak të xhelozisë (Kadare, 2003: 62-63).

Te eseja *Identiteti evropian i shqiptarëve*, Kadareja e trajton pederastinë si pjesë të ndikimeve kulturore aziatike e islamike të sjella nga pushtuesi turk në Shqipëri. Pederastia paraqitet si pjesë e një programi të mirëllogaritur për të injektuar frymën e nënshtrimit dhe të robërisë te shqiptarët. Gjatë diskutimit të motiveve homoerotike në poezinë e bejtexhinjve, Kadareja shkruan se nën efektet e poezive dhe këngëve kushtuar afsheve të “lalëve” për djemtë e rinj, do të mjaftonin disa breza që vetë ideja e lirisë të shuhej, por kultura shqiptare i qëndroi këtij sulmi dhe këto motive të degjeneruara mbetën të izoluara (Kadare, 2006: 27-30). Në këtë mënyrë, Kadareja e lidh homoseksualitetin me subjektivitetin politik. Mendimi i tij shkon paralel me atë të grekëve klasikë, për të cilët pederastia ishte moralisht e pranueshme, por prostitucioni homoseksual ishte i lejueshëm nga normat shoqërore vetëm kur kryhej me skllevër apo të huaj që nuk mbanin qytetarinë. Ky shqetësim në Athinën dhe Romën e lashtë buronte nga fakti se moralisht ishte e papranueshme për burrat e lirë, të cilët ushtronin qytetarinë, që t’i bindeshin autoritetit të dikujt që në rini kishte abuzuar me trupin dhe e kishte lënë veten që të ishte një objekt pasiv kënaqësie për të tjerët (Foucault, 1990: 218-220; Garton, 2004: 32-35). Duket sikur Kadareja ngre një argument të ngjashëm, por kësaj radhe në lidhje me marrëdhëniet shqiptaro-turke gjatë sundimit osman. Për të, pavarësia kombëtare e shqiptarëve është e lidhur me idetë e burrërisë, guximit, lirisë vetjake etj. Këto ide kërkojnë që burrat ta trajtojnë njëri-tjetrin me të njëjtin dinjitet, ashtu sikurse thuhet edhe në të drejtën zakonore, ekzistencën e së cilës Kadareja e paraqet si një nga provat e identitetit evropian të kulturës shqiptare. Nisur nga këto supozime rezulton se dominimi seksual i nënkuptuar në marrëdhëniet homoseksuale të

burrave të pjekur me djem adoleshentë nuk është i pajtueshëm me idenë e dinjitetit të barbartë mes burrave shqiptarë. Prandaj, burrat e femërzuar dhe të tjera perversitete seksuale i shkojnë për shtat despotizmit oriental, ndërsa burrëria shoqëron lirinë dhe identitetin evropian. Meqenëse qëllimi i esesë së Kadaresë është argumentimi i identitetit evropian të shqiptarëve, atëherë ai e përdor homoseksualitetin, ose më saktë, atë që e quan pedofili, si kufi të pakalueshëm që ndan kulturën shqiptare prej asaj turke dhe rrjedhimisht edhe Evropën prej Azisë.

### Shënime përmbyllëse

Pjesa më e madhe e veprave letrare dhe e eseve të Ismail Kadaresë janë të natyrës politike, jo vetëm për shkak të temës që trajtojnë, por edhe për idetë që synojnë t'i përcjellin publikut të lexuesve. Një temë e përgjithshme e romaneve të tij është qëndresa e kombit shqiptar ndaj perandorive të huaja dhe regjimeve shtypëse. Paçka se pjesa kryesore të veprës letrare Kadareja e shkroi gjatë njërit prej regjimeve më të egra totalitare komuniste në Evropë, ai ndonjëherë u përpoq që edhe të kritikonte sistemin me një gjuhë të dykuptimtë. Si glorifikimit të qëndresës kombëtare në shekuj, po ashtu edhe kritikës së sistemit komunist me anë të alegorive dhe simboleve i nevojitej një e shkruar historike e përshtatshme. Parë në këtë aspekt, Perandoria Osmane ofrohej si vendndodhje ideale, sepse kishte qenë pushtuesi i Shqipërisë për gjysmë mijëvjeçari dhe akuzohej për prapambetjen e Shqipërisë në krahasim me vendet e Evropës Perëndimore. Për më tepër, që nga koha e iluminizmit, në rrethet intelektuale evropiane Perandoria Osmane shihej si shembulli parësor i “despotizmit oriental”. Megjithëse deri tani nuk e kemi hasur këtë term në veprën e Kadaresë, panorama e Perandorisë Osmane që ai ka ndërtuar me anë të disa prej romaneve më të njohur dhe eseve duket se është ndikuar nga ky koncept i organizimit politik. Me anë të laboratorit të tij letrar, Kadareja e shndërroi Perandorinë Osmane në pararendësen e shteteve moderne diktatoriale dhe totalitare. Kështu ai mund ta përdorte imazhin e tij të Perandorisë Osmane për të kritikuar si perandorinë historike, “tjetrin” oriental të kombit shqiptar, po ashtu edhe Bashkimin Sovjetik revizionist, e madje ta përdorte edhe për të ndërmarrë një kritikë të fshehtë të komunizmit shqiptar.

Artikulli ynë u përqendrua në përdorimin prej Kadaresë së trupave për të ndërtuar imazhe të një Perandorie Osmane mizore, shtypëse e barbare

dhe për të përcjellë një ndjesi të përbashkësisë së fatit që shqiptarët kanë me popujt e tjerë ballkanas, si popujt evropianë të sunduar nga një shtet aziatik. Më sipër, pamë ballafaqimet e veshjeve shqiptare me ato turke, politikën e ferexhesë të sulltanit, spektaklin e tmerrshëm të kokave të prera në kryeqytet dhe në krahinat e asimiluara të perandorisë, kontrollin shtetëror të shtrirë mbi gjumin dhe ëndrrat, trupëzimin e frymës aziatike dhe islamike te diktatori i ardhshëm shqiptar dhe projektin osman për të shkatërruar burrinë, subjektivitetin dhe lirinë shqiptare me anë të injektimit të motiveve të homoerotizmit oriental në folklorin shqiptar. Rasti i krijimtarisë shumëplanëshe të Kadaresë është ndoshta më i miri për të hulumtuar se si qarkullojnë stereotipat orientaliste në kulturën intelektuale shqiptare. Ato janë përdorur me shumë efekt në letërsi, por nuk kanë mbetur të kufizuara vetëm në rrafshin estetik. Me peshën që i jep atij autoriteti i shkrimtarit dhe intelektualit më të njohur shqiptar, orientalizmi shfaqet në esetë me natyrë politiko-sociologjike mbi identitetin kolektiv shqiptar e marrëdhëniet e tij me Evropën, e më tutje shndërrohet edhe në një metodë për rrëfimin e historisë shqiptare të lidhur me aktualitetin.

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## The Orient and Bodies in the Works of Ismail Kadare

ENIS SULSTAROVA

### **Abstract**

The literary works and several essays of Albanian writer Ismail Kadare are deeply political in nature, because a general theme of his novels, especially the historical ones, is the survival and fate of the Albanian nation during its history of struggles against powerful enemies. It is widely accepted that although a substantial part of his literary works were created during the communism, Kadare managed, through double and hidden meanings, to write critically against the Albanian political system. In several novels and stories he treats the Ottoman Empire and the Turks as the Oriental Others of the European Albanian nation. Building on the historical events familiar to Albanians, he treated the Ottoman Empire as a totalitarian system par excellence and tried to send home to his readers certain moral and political ideas about their own present. This paper looks into his use of the body and embodiment in creating the radical difference between the Albanians and the Turks. Several aspects of literary construction of the Oriental body are investigated like: (1) the Oriental dress and domination, (2) severed heads of enemies and rebels, (3) state control over sleep and dreams, (4) the embodiment of the Oriental spirit in actual persons and (5) homosexuality and servitude. By relying on the rich archive of clichés and stereotypes of Orientalism that are exposed and criticized by Edward Said and others following in his footsteps, Kadare

has constructed a literary but at the same time truly political discourse that still is very influential on the way the Albanian political and cultural elites imagine the nation.

## Introduction

Ismail Kadare is the most famous Albanian writer and representative of Albanian literature in the world. Through his literary works he covers key periods in the medieval and modern history of Albanian people, and his work as a whole forms an artistic narrative of Albanian national identity. Kadare portrayed in his novels the pre-Ottoman medieval period, the uprising of Skanderbeg against the Ottomans, the Ottoman period, the independence, the Liberation War of partisans against the fascists during World War II, the Albanian Cultural Revolution, the break up with Soviet Union and China etc. The motive which is present in most of his historical works since the 1960s is the resistance of Albanian people throughout history. Although he was officially acclaimed as one of the main representatives of Albanian socialist realism literature, Kadare in some of his novels employed an ambiguous language, which could be interpreted as a veiled critique of communist totalitarianism. He even wrote novels that were openly hostile to the communist regime, which were smuggled outside the country and were arranged to be published posthumously. They were published after the fall of the communist regime. During the post-communist transition Kadare as a public intellectual has been an ardent defender of the European identity of Albanians and a strong supporter of the EU integration of his country. By exploiting his cultural capital as a well-known writer in the country and abroad, he has written several essays and given numerous interviews, where he takes the position of the mediator between Albanian people and “Europe”. These are the reasons why his works have a deep political character. For example, one Albanian critic writes that “every page of Albanian past and today has its echo in Kadare’s works. His work is an artistic encyclopedia of the fate of this country” (Çaushi, 2004: 214). In this way, the literary output of Kadare is an example of “combative literatures”, which are politically engaged, are permeated by a national feeling and are a terrain for claims of national existence in a international arena characterized by imperialism (Casanova, 2011).

Many of Kadare’s literary works and political essays are infused by the discourse of Orientalism, understood here as a “style of thought based

upon and ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (Said, 1978: 2). The Occident, or the West, or Europe holds the high ground and signifies the good, progress, reason, the future, the familiar etc., while the Orient, or Asia, signifies the bad, regress, the past, the exotic etc. This distinction was born in the Western Europe as a way to deal with foreign cultures, religions and political adversaries in the Levant, Maghreb, Eastern Europe and further in Central and Easter Asia. In modern times Orientalism was closely linked to the Western expansion in the world and with its ideologies and politics of colonialism and imperialism. In Western culture and arts, Orientalism provided the "starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, 'mind', destiny, and so on" (ibid.: 3). Western Orientalism traveled to other cultures in Europe and beyond, because the modernizing nations constructed their identities in the mirror of Occident. As a consequence, in the words of historian Ussama Makdisi, "in an age of Western-dominated modernity, every nation creates its own Orient" (2002: 768). In the Albanian Orientalism since the National Renaissance of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the main Oriental other are the Ottoman Empire and the Turks (Sulstarova, 2013). The image of Albanians found in Kadare's novels and essays is that of a people of ancient European stock, possessing an oral culture that shows many similarities to the ancient Greek culture. This people together with its Balkan neighbors at some point in their history faced the "barbarous" invasion of the Ottoman Turks coming from Asia. The motive that permeates many of Kadare's novels is in fact the resistance and survival of Albanian culture during the Oriental and "barbaric" rule of the Ottoman rule that lasted for 500 years (ibid.: ch. 5).

Building on my previous studies, this article explores further the Orientalist discourse in the works of Kadare, by focusing on his use of bodies to articulate the distinction between the European world and the Ottoman-Islamic world. Body is the site for the construction of gender, ethnicity or racial differences and here we explore the portrayal of bodies in his fiction and essays, which point to the contrast between "us" and "the other". By situating himself as a writer within the Orientalist discourse, Kadare has been able to fictionalize an exotic, cruel, despotic and most importantly, grotesque Ottoman world which is dissimilar from our own, but which nevertheless is grounded on the historical experience of the

Albanian people during the Ottoman rule. According to one of Kadare's hypothesis, the birth of Greek tragedy reflects the horrors, anxieties and crimes of the dictatorial states that lied in the East of the ancient Greece: Persian Empire, Hittite Empire, Assyrian-Babylonian Empire and the Egypt of pharaohs. Centuries later, writers from the Balkans would give in their literatures the same horrendous atmosphere of Ottoman Empire, which not only encompassed the same territories and characteristics of the ancient Eastern empires, but also was the precursor of the modern Nazi and Soviet empires. The main characteristic that makes the Ottoman Empire to be taken as the essence of the dictatorial and totalitarian states in pre-modern and modern eras lies in its bureaucracy, which is "a terrible monster" or an "infernal machinery" and these images are best captured by the writers from the Balkans, neither by the Western nor Turkish writers (Kadare, 1990: 169; Kadare & Faye, 2007: 32-33). The Western writers see from the outside an exotic empire and the Turkish writers are too inside to capture the totalitarian aspect of the Ottoman Empire, but the Balkan writers, like Kadare himself, are both inside and outside, they write about the Ottoman Empire from the perspectives of peoples who were once dominated by the Ottomans, but now are sovereign subjects in Europe.

We hope that this article opens the ground for other investigation of the political use of the bodies in literature of Kadare. The human body has been a persistent metaphor for social and political relations. Not only the phrase "body politic" signifies the political organization, but also different parts of the body have been employed as metaphors for different social groups or institutions. Besides the metaphorical aspects, the body politic has been established in, through, and over the physical body. Political power originates in power over the body ("biopower" in Michel Foucault's term) and the political power of the state is used to discipline, police, control and care about the lives and bodies of their subjects/citizens (for instance laws on abortion or institutions and practices such as the army, prisons, schools, census, social welfare etc). Biopower has found representation in literature and literature itself has been employed in the service of governance of souls and bodies of the citizens, like it happened with realist socialist literary works in ex-communist countries, which were part of the engineering of the New Man.

The Flemish publicist Piet de Moor (2007: 45-48) has noticed in the works of Kadare a close relationship between body and politics. This observation can be illustrated with many episodes from Kadare's novels.

Thus, in the novel *Black Year* [Alb.: *Viti i mbrapshtë*] the Albanian Muslim fanatics demand that the German prince sent by European powers to rule Albania become circumcised, in order for them to accept him as a legitimate sovereign. In the same novel the foreign diplomats accredited in Albania exchange diplomatic secrets over the body of a prostitute they sleep with and the later wonders about her role in the game of Albanian politics. In the novel *The General of the Dead Army*, an Italian general is sent to Albania to recover the remains of the dead bodies of the Italian soldiers of the Second World War. An episode at the end of the novel *The Concert* [Alb.: *Koncert në fund të dimrit*], involves an Albanian worker who steps on the foot of a Chinese co-worker in a factory. This minor incident is turned into a diplomatic issue amidst the tense relations between the two communist countries. The central character of another novel, *The Life, Play and Death of Lul Mazreku*, is an Albanian soldier serving in a small town near the border during the last years of communism. He is ordered to act in public as the corpse of someone allegedly killed by guards while trying to escape across the state border, in order to frighten the populace and to discourage other escape attempts.

Likewise, Kadare uses the metaphor of body or flesh to refer to nations. Thus, in one of his novels, a character meditates about the rebellious nations of the Ottoman Empire and one thought that comes to his mind is that it would be good for the state if it get rids of some of its disturbing parts, like someone removing from his body the foreign fleshy outgrowths (Kadare, 1989: 18).<sup>1</sup> Many years later, in the essay *The European Identity of the Albanians*, Kadare writes that the Albanian nation was damaged in body and mind by the long Ottoman rule. Besides the Albanian nation has experienced “in its flesh” what does it mean to be expelled from Europe, because the chauvinist neighbors wanted to present the Muslim Albanians as a “foreign body” to Europe and as a danger to the European civilization (Kadare, 2006: 27, 17, 18).<sup>2</sup> In particular, Kadare focuses on body mutilations to construct grotesque panoramas and episodes from the cruel and “barbarous” history of Ottoman Empire. For instance, in a novel he describes the “collectors” in an Ottoman army in Albania who

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1 Alb.: ...si njeriu që heq nga trupi mishin e huaj.

2 Alb.: ...e ka ndier në mishin e tij këtë lemeri (p. 17); Shqiptarët myslimanë, mish i huaj për Evropën e krishterë (p.18).

rushed after the battle to collect body parts of the fallen enemies – teeth, fingers, braids, ears, nails or eyebrows – and afterwards to sell them to the rich people in the cities (Kadare, 1981[IV]: 46). In a story, the sultan tries to eradicate the effects of evil eye through an orchestrated campaign of voluntary and forceful blinding. The sultan's decree calls on all his subjects to denounce openly or with anonymous letter those suspected of having evil eyes (Kadare, 1991: 316-362). Through this grotesque variant of the historical witch hunts, Kadare draws our attention to the atmosphere of fear and terror created by the dictatorial and totalitarian states. Another episode from the novel *The Castle* narrates the summary execution of an Ottoman technician by a group of Janissary soldiers. The technician had mistakenly calculated the trajectory of the cannon shot and the ball hit some of the Janissaries who were climbing the castle's wall. The furious Janissaries take revenge in their own hands, not only by brutally killing the poor technician, but also by dismembering his body. Through narrating this horrible act, Kadare conveys a deeper message about the Ottoman rule.

When they drew closer, while their eyes were searching for the body of the executed, they saw some sappers who were throwing something with shovel in a stretcher. This something was not a body, nor limbs, nor part of limbs. It was a mix of soil, flesh, bones and pebbles made by the hot-blooded fury of yataghans and axes... Some Janissaries, who had remained there, were looking perplexedly at the two high functionaries. For sure, they had taken part in the massacre... Earlier they had stroke against the technician with all the hate and simultaneous fear that they sensed by the enigma of knowledge, which tyrannized their souls. Through cutting into pieces the technician, they thought they could be liberated from this fear of the terrible unknown. In reality their liberation would last for a while, until the fear would gather drop by drop in their souls and would start to tyrannize again (Kadare, 1981[IV: 199-200]).<sup>1</sup>

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1 Alb.: Kur u afruan fare pranë, ndërsa po kërkonin me sy trupin e të ekzekutuarit, ata panë disa xhenjerë që po hidhnin diçka me lopata në një tezgë. Kjo diçka nuk ishte as trup, as gjymtyrë, as copa gjymtyrësh. Ishte diçka e përzier midis dheut, mishit, kockave dhe gurishteve të vogla, të bëra njësh nga furia e papërmbajtur e jataganëve dhe e sëpatave... Ca jeniçerë, që kishin mbetur atje, vështronin të hutuar dy funksionarët e lartë. Ishin, me siguri, nga ata që kishin marrë pjesë në

Besides these scattered examples of the use of body and its parts, in the following part of the article we will look in a more systematic way how bodies, in the Oriental context of the Ottoman Empire, are put by Kadare in relation to politics and how they enable him to artistically convey to his readers broader meaning about the relationship of the Albanians with the Ottoman Empire and with the Orient in general. Our analysis covers these physical and cultural aspects of the body: (1) Oriental dress and domination, (2) severed heads (3) state control over sleep and dreams, (4) embodiment of Oriental spirit in real persons and (5) homosexuality and servitude. Nevertheless, we do not pretend here to have exhausted the topic of politics of bodies in the works of Kadare, and our article should be taken as a modest contribution in this regard.

### **Oriental dress and domination**

The dress that covers the body is often seen as an extension of the person who wears it. It reveals not only the corporeal image he or she wants to project to others, but also his or her tastes, mood, social position and personality. Such commonplace observations about dress are used by Kadare to contrast the character of the Turks and Orientals with that of the Albanians. In the novel *The Three-Arched Bridge* the readers are given an imaginary first encounter of Albanians with Turks in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the time when the Ottomans were making inroads in the Balkans. An Albanian monk, Gjon gives a description the dress and bodily performance of Turks, based on various merchants, soldiers and political envoys he has seen:

Their flat songs, with a sleepy heaviness are increasingly heard everywhere. Their behavior, their soft walking, their movement inside the broad dress, which looks like made on purpose to hide the form of their limbs, and especially their language, whose words, contrary to the lethargy of the songs, end with something like a stroke of hatchet, all these give to me a dim anxiety.

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masakër.... Pak kohë më parë ata kishin qëlluar mbi mekanikun me gjithë urrejtjen dhe njëkohësisht frikën që ndienin nga enigma e diturosë, e cila i tiranizonte shpirtat e tyre. Duke e grirë copa-copa mekanikun, ata kujtonin se mund të çliroheshin nga kjo frikë e së panjohurës së tmerrshme. Ata në të vërtetë do të çliroheshin përkohësisht prej saj, gjersa ajo të mbledhej përsëri pikë-pikë në ndërgjegjen e tyre dhe të fillonte t'i tiranizonte përsëri.



And anxiety is turned into some kind of horror when I think that these people hide many things. After their smile and kindness there is something sneaky. Not for nothing there are no straight lines in their silky robes – turbans, salvars and gowns – neither angles, breaks nor turns. Everything is indeterminate and made to shift form continuously. Within such a dress, it is difficult to tell apart the hand that holds a knife from the hand that holds a flower. But, how can you expect openness from a nation that hides its source: the women (Kadare, 1981[VIII]: 158).<sup>1</sup>

Through his eyes and ears, the Albanian monk senses the strangeness of songs, words and dress, from which he constructs the slippery character of the Turks. In another work, it is the turn of a Turk to become astonished by the Albanian dress. The story “The Celebration Commission” [Alb. “Komisioni i festës”] is based on a real event, the Massacre of Manastir (present day Bitola in Macedonia) in 1830. Hundreds of rebellious beys from southern Albania and their entourage were invited in the city by the Ottoman general Resid Mehmed Pasha, allegedly to be pardoned, but they were treacherously killed. This dramatic event truncated the power of local feudal lords in the south and led to the subsequent destruction of Albanian pashalik of Scutari in the north. In Kadare’s story built on the massacre, we encounter Nuh Effendi, an Ottoman functionary responsible for preparing the ceremony and the banquet for the Albanian guests. When he sees the arrival of Albanian beys to the city he is so shocked by their dresses, especially by the characteristic white kilt, that he is unable to sleep afterwards. To the Albanian national costume he attributes one of the causes of their rebellious nature:

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1 Alb.: Këngët e tyre të zvarguara, me një rënim gjumi midis, dëgjohen shpesh e më shpesh kudo. Sjëlljet e tyre, ecja e lehtë, lëvizjet e tyre brenda veshjeve të gjera, që duket sikur janë bërë enkas për të fshehur gjendjen e gjymtyrëve, dhe sidomos gjuha e tyre, fjalët e së cilës, në kundërshtim me përgjumjen e këngëve, mbarojnë në fund me një si goditje tokmaku, të gjitha këto mua më ngjallin një shqetësim të turbullt. Dhe ky shqetësim më shndërrohet në një lloj tmerri, ku mendoj se këta njerëz fshehin shumë gjëra. Pas buzëqeshjes dhe mirësjelljes së tyre ka diçka tinëzare. Jo më kot në veshjet e tyre të mëndafshita, në çallmat, në shallvaret dhe në xhybet e tyre nuk ka vija të drejta, kënde, thyerje ose kthesa. Çdo gjë është e papërcaktuar dhe e bërë në një mënyrë të atillë, që të ndërrojë formë vazhdimisht. Pas një veshjeje të tillë të vagëlluar është vështirë të dallosh krahun që mban një thikë nga krahun që mban një lule. Por, në fund të fundit, si mund të presësh çiltërsi nga një komb që fsheh burimin e vet: gratë.

The dresses of the Albanians had rebellion in every sleeve and every seam, not to mention the cuffs of kilts, which resembled the winding sea waves and particularly those red pompon on the leather shoes, with which it looked like they would put the whole empire on fire (Kadare, 1981[XI]: 281).<sup>1</sup>

Nuh Effendi feels that however stubborn they might be, the Albanians would look more acceptable if they would wear the state silk gowns, with their somnolent color and shape. Only now does he realize the reason why the Sultan had employed experts to simplify and erase the national costumes of the peoples in the empire (ibid.).

The veil is part of Islamic dress for women and arguably the most visible and debated aspect of gender segregation and domination in Islamic societies. In the Western Orientalism it has been taken as the key sign that shows the inferiority of the Islamic societies vis-à-vis the Western one. Together with the harem, the veil has been the center of the Western erotic fantasies about the Oriental women bodies. In Kadare's prose the veil becomes the symbol of "Oriental despotism" of men over women and a symbol of a geopolitical divide between the Europe, the abode of freedom and love, and the Orient, where religion has erased both freedom and love. One of the contrasts that we find in his novel *The Castle* is that between the women slaves in the harem of the Turkish army's commander and the free Albanian women who stand besides their men at the top of the walls of the besieged castle. The Albanian women with their white skin and light color hair catch the astonished and lustful eyes of many Turkish soldiers who desire them. One dervish (*sheh*) in his speech before the soldier exposes the Ottoman state's policy for submission of Albanian women after the war.

We will undress their women and girls from their white and shameless clothes and we will dress them with the black and noble robe blessed by religion. We will cover with veil their faces and cunning

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1 Alb.: Veshjet e shqiptarëve e kishin rebelimin në çdo mëngë e në çdo tegel të tyre, për të mos zënë ngoje palat e fustanellave, që dukej sikur u frynin njëra-tjetrës si dallgë deti, dhe sidomos ato xhufka të kuqe mbi opinga, me të cilat dukej sikur ata do t'i vinin zjarrin perandorisë.

eyes, with which they look freely at men. We will make them forget the fury of love and they will marry men in accordance to the sacred laws of Sharia. We will make the bow their rebellious heads to the power of men, as the Holy Qur'an prescribes (Kadare, 1981[IV]: 49-50).<sup>1</sup>

From another work of Kadare, "The Bringer of Calamity" we are informed that many years later, when Albania and the whole Balkans have become part of the Ottoman state, finally the sultan decrees for the veils to be sent in the European part of the empire. He has ordered the production of half a million veils that the carrier Haxhi Milet will transport with his caravan of mules to the Balkan Peninsula. He is an ordinary Turk, a faithful Muslim, a devoted husband and father, and an official who wants to duly perform his job. This is the first time he is travelling in the European part of the empire, where the new mosques are being built besides old churches. He arrives somewhere in the Balkans, where there are mixed Greek-Albanian villages and stops to drink from a fountain alongside his road. Everything looks ordinary till when his eyes catch sight of a group of local young women that were filling water in the fountain. It is the first time that he sees unveiled women, with uncovered necks, legs and particularly eyes. Suddenly he senses that everything have changed forever in his life.

Eyes of women and girls. He was not used to them and felt he could not stand them. The whole world seemed different with them. It was like to wake up one morning and to find out that the world has two suns. It was just like this: a large sun, the one we know, and another one but crumbled in thousand and thousand small pieces that were spread like pair of pearls over the women's foreheads [...] Allah, he sighed. There were days with sun and nights with moon, but there were something else as well: days with women eyes. This was the first such a day in his life... There would be more days like this one, twenty, thirty, as long as this trip would last, and then the return trip and after that nothing... the night would fall (Kadare,

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1 Alb.: Grave dhe vajzave të tyre do t'iu heqim veshjet e bardha e të paturpshme dhe t'u veshim rrobën e zezë e fisnike, të bekuar nga feja. Ne do t'ua mbulojmë me perçe fytyrat dhe sytë e tyre dinakë, me të cilat ato, gjer tani shikohen lirisht me meshkujt. Ne do të bëjmë që ato të harrojnë tërbimin e dashurisë dhe të martohen me meshkujt sipas ligjeve të shenjta të sheriatit. Ne do të bëjmë që ato të ulin kokat e tyre rebele nën pushtetin e burrit, ashtu siç thotë Kurani i shenjtë.

1986: 135-136).<sup>1</sup>

Not being able to speak the women's language, Haxhi Milet can only communicate through eyes and gestures, so they open the way for him to approach the well and one young open offers her keg to him to drink from. For a few moments he not only sees the women but he is also seen by women's eyes. In those exchanges of looks, he discovered the woman beauty and he fell in love for the first time in his life. He realized that his duty to veil those women was a calamity. On his way back eastward to the center of empire, he notices how the public presence of women becomes increasingly rare and assumes that the implementation of sultan's decree has started. He feels responsible for this catastrophe he brought on the womenfolk of the European side of the empire: "The world seemed cold and grey, like behind an eclipse [...] There had been the sun eclipse and the moon eclipse and the third eclipse was happening, that of the women" (ibid.: 150-151).<sup>2</sup> When he passes by the same fountain does not see the women, the world seems deserted and he starts to cry. When he resumes the trip his soul has rebelled against the decree of the veil and somehow has become alienated against his own body and his world, in a way foreseeing Haxhi Milet's collapse and death.

The caravan continued to move towards the east. The kingdom of women had remained behind. From here onward was the world of timeless veil. There were no more uncovered women, nor perturbing thoughts. Only he was entering like a foreign body in the East. God save me, said to himself two-three times. Then, the thoughts were mixed up again, like blown by a mad wind. He recalled all he had seen and listened during that last period of his life and suddenly he said almost loudly: Cover the sun and the moon,

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1 Alb.: Sy grash e vajzash. S' ishte mësuar më këtë dhe e ndiente që nuk e përballonte dot. Bota dukej ndryshe me to. Ishte njëlloj si të gdhieshe një mëngjes e ta gjeje botën me dy diej. Po, ishte tamam ashtu: një diell i madh, ai që njohim, dhe një tjetër i grimcuar në mijëra e mijëra copa, shpërndarë si çifte margaritarësh mbi balle grash [...] Allah, psherëtiu ai. Kishte ditë me diell e net me hënë por kishte edhe një gjë tjetër: ditë me sy grash. Ishte e para ditë e tillë në jetën e tij... Do të kishte edhe ca të tjera, njëzet, tridhjetë, aq sat ë zgjaste ky udhëtim dhe pastaj rruga e kthimit dhe pas saj asgjë... do të binte nata.

2 Alb.: Bota iu duk e ftohtë dhe e hirnosur si pas një eklipsi [...] Kishte pasur eklips të diellit e eklips të hënës dhe tani po ndodhte i treti eklips, ai i grave.

Padishah, cover the stars and the sea, but do not cover those women (ibid.: 152).<sup>1</sup>

He goes do far as to curse the decree, for whose implementation he has been a blind instrument. Seeing him perturbed and sensing that he might have done something wrong during the last trip, the secret agents of the state arrest Haxhi Milet upon his arrival at the caravan station near Istanbul. He is interrogated intensely about the presumed crime. He does not confess anything, till one day they find him dead in his cell, with his face covered with a black handkerchief, tied in the same way women tie the veils before their faces.

The binary oppositions are apparent in this story: Europe vs. the Orient, day vs. night, light vs. darkness. Women eyes are compared to the sun, which is the source of life on earth, and the veil that covers their faces is compared to an eclipse. Love is not possible without physical attraction, without seeing the opposite sex and being seen back. Women faces, eyes and hairs are not seen in public in the Orient and that is why love does not exist there, but only in Europe. This explain why Haxhi Milet has discovered women, love and the joy of life itself in the European part of the empire, which still remained distinct from the Asian and the original part of the empire.

After the fall of communism, by undertaking the mission to intermediate between “Europe” and Albania, Kadare has encouraged Albanians to resemble as much as possible the Europeans, because strong prejudices exist in Europe in relation to those who appear un-European.

Although they do not openly accept it, the Europeans do not love the peoples who are in Europe but who do not look European. They are increasingly aggravated by the distinctive signs, the dress and habits from other continents, the Middle East in the first place... The Albanian identity is not aggravating but attractive to Europe. We have to deal with a misunderstanding, or confusion with the signs of other continents which have

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1 Alb.: Karvani vazhdonte të ecte drejt lindjes. Mbretëria e grave kishte mbetur pas. Këndej e tutje ishte bota e ferezhesë shekullore. As gra të zbuluara dhe as mendime trazuese s'kishte më. Vetëm ai po hynte si mish i huaj në të. Zoti më ruajtë, tha dy-tri herë me vete. Pastaj mendimet iu çakërdisën përsëri sikur t'i frynte një erë e marrë. Solli ndërmend gjithçka kishte parë e dëgjuar gjatë asaj periudhe të fundit të jetës së tij dhe befas thirri gati me zë: Mbuloje diellin e hënën, padishah, mbuloji yjet dhe detin, vetëm ato mos i mbulo.

penetrated in the Balkans... and which are alien and worrying to Europe... It is not the Albanian identity, but its abandoning that is an impediment for the European integration. The abandoning starts with non-Albanian dress... to end, in extreme cases, with the abandoning of the Albanian language that is substituted with the Turkish (Kadare, 2004).<sup>1</sup>

Kadare warns the Albanians not to take lightly their outward appearance in their relationship to “Europe”, because the aim of the enemies of Albanian nation was precisely to make it appear as a stranger and a non-European in the eyes of “Europe”. As part of their domination strategy, the rulers of Yugoslavia made all in their hands for the Albanian population to appear as it was an Oriental and Islamic one, and a key to this strategy was to impose the Arab dress on Albanian men and women. Thus, when the hour of liberation struggle would come for the Albanians, the Yugoslavs could obtain a free hand from “Europe” to expel the Albanians from their land, in the name of protecting European civilization from the Islamic terrorism (Kadare, 2006: 42-43). Although Kadare writes that the West did not fall into this trap, he seems to accept as natural the European prejudices against the skin color, dress and behavior for non-Europeans. Kadare attributes a sovereign status to the European gaze, under which Albanians must conform their appearance and dress to look truly European.

### Severed heads

The *The Great Pashaliks* [Alb. *Pashallëqet e mëdha*] is probably the most grotesque novel of Kadare, whose main motif is the severed heads that are put on display in the Ottoman capital. As usual, Kadare takes a real historical

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1 Alb.: Evropianët, pavarësisht se nuk e pranojnë haptas, nuk i duan popujt që, duke qenë në Evropë, nuk u ngjajnë atyre. Ata gjithmonë e më tepër acarohen nga shenjat dalluese, veshjet e zakonet që vijnë nga kontinente të tjera, kryesisht nga Lindja e Mesme... Identiteti shqiptar jo vetëm që nuk është acarues, por është tërheqës për Europën. Këtu është fjala për një keqkuptim, për një ngatërresë me shenja të kontinenteve të tjera, Afrikë dhe Azi, që kanë depërtuar në Ballkan... janë shenja të tjera të kontinenteve të tjera, që për evropianët ngjajnë të huaja e shqetësuese... nuk është identiteti shqiptar, por braktisja e tij, pengesa për integrimin. Braktisja nis me veshje joshqiptare... për të përfunduar në rastet më të skajshme, me braktisjen e gjuhës shqipe, që zëvendësohet me turqishten.

practice, in this case the embalmed head of enemies of the state that are sent as trophies to the imperial seat, and builds on it a series of symbols that convene political messages for the present. The novel opens with a description of the main square of the Ottoman Empire, where the “ibret taşı”, or the “niche of shame” (the literal translation would be the “example stone”), on which the heads are placed is situated among the other state buildings and monuments. It is positioned there on purpose, because it catches the eye of the casual observer and in this way make him or her situate oneself in respect to the power of the state:

Maybe nowhere else the eye of the passer-by could not notice so easily the relationship created between the heavy etatism of the old imperial square and the human severed head, which had dare to challenge it. It was immediately apparent that the niche on the wall was opened in such a way as to create the impression that the extinct eyes of the head looked at all objects in the square. It was calculated that even the less imaginative passer-by and even for only a fraction of a moment, would imagine his own head put in that unnatural height which was higher than a man's standing body, but shorter than the head of man on the horse (Kadare, 1989: 8).<sup>1</sup>

Head is the foremost part of the body that tells an individual apart from all the others. It contains the brain and most organs of the senses and is taken to be the locus of reason, opposite to the heart as the locus of emotions. By putting the head of the rebels on the public display the state machinery reminds all the subjects about their helplessness in confronts of the sovereign power: they do not matter as individuals. As it becomes apparent during the story, the heads of those who once were powerful rulers and high state functionaries end up in the niche. The state's terror is absolute and indiscriminate: the heads of rebellious Ali Pasha, ruler of southern Albania,

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1 Alb.: Ndoshta asgjëkund tjetër syri i kalimtarit nuk do të mund të kapte kaq lehtësisht raportin që krijohej midis statizmit të rëndë të sheshit shekullor perandorak dhe kokës së prerë njerëzore, që kishte dashur ta sfidonte atë. Dukej menjëherë se zgjedhja e vendit të kamares në mur ishte bërë në mënyrë të tillë, që të krijonte përshtypjen se sytë e shuar të kokës shikonin të gjitha objektet e sheshit. Në këtë mënyrë ishte llogaritur që edhe kalimtarit më me pak fantazi, qoftë edhe për një grim, t'i shkonte nëpër mend ta përfytyronte kokën e vet të vendosur në atë lartësi të panatyrshme, pak më të madhe se shtati i njeriut në këmbë, por më të ulët se koka e njeriut mbi kalë.

and that of Hurshid Pasha, the faithful Ottoman commander who suppresses the rebellion of Ali Pasha, are both put in the “niche of shame”.

The niche of shame connects the fates of the main characters of the novel. Hurshid pasha knows that the niche will not stay empty for long, because either Ali Pasha's or his head will fill it. Even in his dreams he thinks about the war of Ottoman state with the rebel Albanian as the battle between the two heads for escaping the niche. He is so terrorized by the thought that the head may be displayed to the public after his death, so that before taking his own life, in his will orders for his body to be buried very deep in the ground. But this is in vain, because the carrier of heads, Tunxh Hatai, opens the grave and severs the head from the corpse (*ibid.*: 148).

Abdullah is a state functionary who is charged with observation of embalmed heads in the niche. If he sees signs of decomposition of other marks he should immediately call the physician who cares for the health of the severed heads. He is proud of his job and turns his routine controls into a pompous performance for the public, also because he envies the heads that get all the attention. But Abdullah is tortured by a private secret: he is not able to have sexual intercourse with his young bride. The physician friend, who cares for the heads in the niche, tells him that his problem is a common and temporary physical dysfunction, caused by the lack of feminine element in the public life in the Orient. The segregated life of genders turns the woman into a mystical entity in psychology of man and, as a consequence, his suppressed drives inhibit the sexual performance (*ibid.*: 72). But Abdullah's frustration grows bigger, especially in the Night of Power, during which, following a centuries-long tradition, the sovereign sleeps with a virgin. On these occasions all the city beams of lights of celebrations and canon shots are fired to symbolize the virility of the sovereign and the power of the state itself. That night, Abdullah heard the canon shots after the futile attempt to make love to his wife: “Under that canon roar that trembled the world, the employee Abdullah crawled like a snail” (*ibid.*: 73).<sup>1</sup> Because of the psychological frustration that his body is not responding to his head and the body organs are betraying him, Abdullah envies the heads of the pashas in the niche for the multitude of women that they enjoyed in their lives. Abdullah feels alienated from his body, which betrays him at nights, therefore he desires to become head, so that his bride cannot expect other

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1 Alb.: Nën atë gjënim që dridhte botën, nëpunësi Abdulla zvarritej si një kërmill.



things from him except the kisses and his shame of impotence will come to an end. He desires to become a head in the niche, so that he at last could be at the center of public attention and terrorize the square. In order to be a subject, a powerful individual, like those who had defied the state, he has to rebel against the state. In Albanian language, the word for rebellion or uprising is *kryengritje*, literally meaning “the raise of the head”. At one point he starts to swear against the state in public and calls for his head to be raised higher and put inside the niche of shame. But the state has another punishment for lower-rank rebels like him: he is strangled and his body is thrown in a marsh at the edge of the city.

The characters Haxhi Milet and Abdullah show remarkable similarities. Both are obedient and proud functionaries of the Ottoman bureaucracy, two small cogs in the big machinery of state. They lead their ordinary lives and take for granted their Oriental world with sex segregation and state terror, until something intimate touches them, in body and spirit. Haxhi Milet knows romantic love when he sees for the first time the white skin, light hair and the eyes of uncovered women in the European part of empire. Abdullah at the very heart of empire, is close to one of the state horrors, the severed heads, but he cannot perform physical love. Both link their personal and intimate situation with the political system and both rebel against it, only to be crushed by the anonymous heaviness of the state. But if the Haxhi Milet becomes conscious of the tyranny of the state and in silence protests against it, Abdullah by his actions affirms it and his loud protest is the result of a madness caused by his own psychological problems. In other words, the eyes of Haxhi Milet are opened at the end of his life, but Abdullah's remain blind forever.

Another character of the novel *The Great Pashaliks* is Tunxh Hatai, who is the balsamer and carrier of the heads from the place of execution to the capital city. He is a middle-level bureaucrat who envies the top functionaries of the state and wishes that some day he could carry their heads to the “niche of shame”. During his duties in various districts of the Ottoman Empire, he shows the heads he carries to the local inhabitants, in return for money. These are culturally assimilated zones, whose denationalized people have lost all memory of their past, and whose language and even the capacity of thinking have atrophied. The occasional theatre of the heads, shown by Tunxh Hatai, is the only spectacle that kindles their emotions from the general apathy, by arousing fear, awe, amusement, even love: “The severed

heads became some kind of knot where the threads of their lives began to be connected. The heads became numbers, signs, borders and in the end some sort of calendar. Events started to be put in relation to them..." (ibid.: 157-158).<sup>1</sup> The heads, serving as nodes that turn the babbles into a discourse, slowly have begun to remind people of their former languages and literary works. Inadvertently, in his second job as an entertainer, Tunxh Hatai has moved grains of national memories culture that had remained in their souls, but which nevertheless are not enough for them to recover their lost cultures.

Like a crampon falling into a well, the severed head roamed above everything that had already died and drown for a long time, in the substrata of their collective consciousness: dried ballads, rusted heroic songs, former war seasons. The head just touched them, it proved their black presence down there, but it could not catch and pull up one of them (ibid.: 158-159).<sup>2</sup>

*The Great Pashaliks* is the main entry of Kadare's imagination into the heart of the Ottoman Empire. The terror of the Ottoman rule stands for the horrendous lives under the totalitarian states. When the novel was published it was interpreted as an allegory of the "revisionist" Soviet Union of the time, a "super-state" in Kadare's term that oppressed and erased the individuality of its peoples. With the fall of communism in Albania, it was pointed out by the authors and critics that the writing of this novel was influenced by the everyday life of Albanians under communism.

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1 Alb.: Qysh atëhere kokat e prera u bënë njëfare pike, ku filluan të lidheshin fjet e jetës së tyre. Ata u bënë numra, shenja, sinore dhe, në fund, një lloj kalendari. Ngjarjet filluan të viheshin në raport me to...

2 Alb.: Si një kanxhë e lëshuar në thellësi të një pusi, koka e prerë endej mbi gjithçka të vdekur dhe të mbytur prej kohësh, në nënshtresat e ndërgjegjes së tyre kolektive, balada të thara, këngë heroike të mbuluara nga ndryshku, stinë të dikurshme luftërash. Ajo, sa i prekte ato, vërtetonte praninë e tyre të zezë atje poshtë, por kurrësi s'ishte e aftë të kapte e të ngrinte ndonjërin prej tyre lart.

### **State control over sleep and dreams**

Sleep is a fundamental physiological need and function of the human body. It involves a partial loss of consciousness and a partial withdrawal from the world. For this reason sleep is often compared to death and death is frequently called “eternal sleep”. In some of Kadare’s novels, sleep and being awake are associated political connotations, because sleep and somnolence (lethargy) denote for him acquiescence of domination, loss of subjectivity and of national consciousness, whereas being awake (and sometimes insomnia) equals to resistance to power and political restlessness. From the point of view of the rulers, the sleep of the subjugated peoples is good, but their insomnia is a warning of rebellions. That’s why the functionaries of the Palace of Dreams, in Kadare’s eponymous novel, measure the amount of sleep of the peoples of the Ottoman Empire. If the amount of sleep of a people is reduced compared to the normal level, then the palace signal the state to take appropriate measures (*ibid.*: 209). In accordance with the well-known Orientalist stereotype of the lethargic and fatalist Asians, Kadare presents sleepiness as a characteristic and even virtue of the Asians, compared to the liveliness of the Europeans. Above we saw how he attributes somnolence the Ottoman dress. In another work, he has an Ottoman high ranking official including sleep in an elegy of the “Oriental despotism”, which is worth citing in full:

I am a devoted Asian. Since my youth I have deeply hated Europe and the Europeans. I have hated their cities and women, the churches, coffeehouses, newspapers, their eagerness to know everything, voting, parliaments, their cold logic, the way they walk and they dress, their way of reasoning, their rebel and polemist spirit, their pride, their permanent restlessness, everything that has to do what they call “human rights” and which in reality are the demon that causes their insomnia. I hate all these, and at the same time I love passionately the blessed somnolence of Anatolia, with the half-bared steppe without ends, over whose cities, villages and sky rules only one man, who has our fate in his hands through with a million strings connected to mystery, and you by yourself do not know from where the good or the bad can reach you, the rise or the fall, because everything is in the hands of someone else and everything lies half in life and half in dream, something that liberates you completely from the restlessness and dilemmas, because you never want to

discover the causes of things, and so you come to this world sleepy and you leave it sleepy, without never being fully awake... (Kadare, 1991: 109-110).<sup>1</sup>

Despite the mutual metaphors, sleep and death are not equal. Even at sleep the human body is alive and responds to external stimuli. Besides humans dream during sleep, a fact which deterred Hamlet to put an end to his life, fearing that his death would be a sleep disturbed by nightmares. Dreams are part human unconsciousness, but in every society they have been considered as related and meaningful for the awaked reality. In most societies special individuals and even institutions were occupied with the interpretation of dreams and this is already an established practice for the understanding of the unconscious in psychoanalysis. We have seen above that, in Kadare's prose, the Oriental despotic state prefers to put peoples to sleep, but it does not trust them even in sleep. When they are asleep and withdrawn from the everyday's worries and political surveillance, people may dream and the dreams are the last remaining bastion of human subjects' freedom. Therefore, the Ottoman state cannot let their subjects' sleep unchecked. The purpose of the Palace of Dreams is to collect and interpret the dreams for finding forewarning signs of political unrest.

In this place, better than from a research, report, account by the police or governors, is understood the real situation of empire. Because in the continent of sleep of every night is found the light and the darkness of humanity, its honey and its poison, its grandeur and its poverty. Everything that is darkly and dangerous, or that will be so after some years or some centuries, gives

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1 Alb.: Unë jam një aziatik i thellë. Qysh në rini i kam urreyer për vdekje Evropën dhe evropianët. I kam urreyer qytetet dhe gratë e tyre, kishat, kafenetë, gazetatat, babëzinë për të marrë vesh çdo gjë, votimet, parlamentet, logjikën e tyre të ftohtë, mënyrën si ecin, si vishen, si arsyetojnë, shpirtin e tyre, kundërshtues, polemist, krenarinë, trazimin e përhershëm, gjithçka që ka të bëjë me atë që ata i quajnë "të drejta të njeriut" dhe që në të vërtetë s'janë veçse demoni i tij gjumëprishës. I urrej pra të gjitha këto, në kohën që më digjet shpirti për përgjumjen e bekuar të Anadollit, për stepën gjysmë të zhveshur që s'ka fund, mbi qytetet, fshatrat e qiellin e së cilës sundon vetëm një njeri prej të cilit varet fati yt, me mijëra fije të lidhura në mister dhe ti vetë nuk e di nga mund të të vijë e mira ose e keqja, ngritja ose rrënimi, se gjithçka i ka rrënjët gjysmë në jetë, gjysmë në ëndërr, gjë që ty të çliron plotësisht nga trazimet, dilemat, sepse asnjëherë nuk kërkon të zbulosh shkaqet e gjërave dhe kështu i përgjumur siç vjen, ashtu edhe ikën nga kjo botë, pa u zgjuar kurrë plotësisht...

it first sign in the dream of man. Every passion, or evil thought, deluge or calamity, rebellion or crime cannot but send its shadow a long time before it appears in this world (Kadare, 1989: 189).<sup>1</sup>

Thus, in the novel *The Palace of Dreams*, Kadare extends the reach of state's bureaucracy to the unconsciousness of the individuals. The state's subjects are made to submit their dreams voluntary to the bureaucracy of the Palace, because each of them hopes that his or her dream might be selected as the Master Dream, which is presented to the sovereign every week. They believe that the fate of the person who saw the Master Dream will change for better, for instance by marrying one of the nieces of the sultan, however, what happens in reality is that the dreamer of Master Dream is subjected to interrogation, torture and finally death in the hands of a state that wants to control the uncontrolled. Furthermore, some "dreams" are fake, which means that they are invented by the corrupt bureaucracy of the Palace as part of the games of power between different political factions of the ruling class.

No one's dreams are refuted, because all the dreams, regardless of the position of the dreamer in the social hierarchy, are treated carefully according to the detailed bureaucratic procedures of the Palace. Trusting in the equal treatment of their dreams by the state, the dreamers of the Ottoman Empire submit to the state their deepest thoughts, secrets and desires. As one of the characters of the novel points out, the Palace of Dreams is "the only institution through each the dark part of the consciousness of all subjects is put in a direct contact with the state" (ibid.: 223).<sup>2</sup> With the surrender of their dreams for the "correct" interpretation, the surrender of the wills of the individuals to the state becomes total.

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1 Alb.: Këtu më mirë se nga çdo studim, procesverbal, raport inspektorësh, relacion policie apo guvernatorësh të pashallëqeve, kuptohet gjendja e vërtetë e perandorisë. Sepse, në kontinentin e përnatshëm të gjumit gjendet drita dhe terri i njerëzimit, mjalti dhe helmi, madhështia dhe mjerimi i tij. Gjithçka që është e turbullt dhe e rrezikshme, apo që do të bëhet e tillë pas disa vjetësh apo pas disa shekujsh, e jep shenjën e parë në ëndrrën e njeriut. Asnjë pasion apo mendim i mbrapshtë, rrebesh apo katastrofë, rebelim apo krim nuk është e mundur të mos dërgojë hijen e vet shumë kohë më parë se të shfaqet ai vetë në botë.

2 Alb.: ...ai është institucioni i vetëm në shtetin tonë, nëpërmjet të cilit pjesa e errët e ndërgjegjes së gjithë shtetasve krijon një kontakt të drejtpërdrejtë me shtetin.

Dreams are also metaphors for brave and innovative ideas that make the world progress, but it is clear in the novel that the state collects and interprets the dreams chiefly for security reasons, and it is more likely to use them for targeting individuals and groups for preventive violence and terror. Besides, the fact that the most important decisions of this great and powerful empire are taken on the basis of omens extracted from master dreams and not on the basis of empirical evidence and rational calculation is telling in itself about the way the state operates in the East. The division of work and the structure of the various departments of the Palace of Dreams are quite rational and the employees seem to perform their work with scientific rigor, but it is the overall objective for which the institution is founded that makes all look absurd and dreadful. Although Kadare has situated the Palace of Dreams in the Ottoman Empire, his work is also an allegory for the communist dictatorships of his time. Kadare has explained that he has modeled the structure of the Palace of Dreams as an underworld or inferno, which resembled other imagined underworlds found in world literature, from the ancient Egyptians and Greeks to those of Saint August or Dante (Kadare, 1990: 175-176). By suggesting an implicit comparison between socialist Albania and the Ottoman Empire, Kadare seems to send to the intelligent reader the hidden message that instead of progressing, Albanian socialism was on the path of historical regression.

### **A spirit in search of a body**

Embodiment refers to the fact human's relation to the world is mediated through the body. Our cognitive capabilities and our awareness of the self and others depend on having bodies. On this meaning of the word lies the metaphorical use of "embodiment": to represent certain ideas or spirit in body or in a material form, or to give a concrete form to abstract ideas. Embodiment is at the center of the Kadare's story "Farewell to the Evil", written in 1987 and published in 1991, the first year of political pluralism in Albania. The story is situated in a southern Albanian city in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a few years before the proclamation of the independence of Albania from the Ottoman Empire.

The bulk of the story is composed by the dialogue between two characters: Beqir Ali, the Ottoman governor of the city and his mysterious visitor from Istanbul. It is apparent to Beqir Ali that his guest holds a high position in the court of the sultan, but he has no clue about his mission.

From his appearance it looks like the guest has been sleepless because he has been tormented by something in his head. The governor worries that the high ranking guest is sent on purpose to dismiss and punish him and lures him into conversation, but to no avail. Then, Beqir Ali spies the guest while he is taking a bath, because he is convinced that “the naked body reveals what the mouth and the eyes hide... The naked body reveals the ambition and the lust, the hesitation or the readiness not to stop before anything, the secret horror, the penance, or the intention to step on corpses” (Kadare, 1991: 92).<sup>1</sup> But from this body Beqir Ali did not learn anything, even the sexual preference of his guest. But Beqir Ali did not surrender and tries another bait, this time sex. He sends to the room of the guest first a girl and then a boy, but the guest sends them away and continues to immerse himself in his deep thoughts.

When Beqir Ali had lost all hope to learn the mission of the enigmatic guest, the later, troubled by insomnia, asks to talk to his host and at last reveals his identity and mission. He is an Ottoman ideologue, an Asian and a fanatic believer in Islam. He is consumed by the hate for Christian Europe and now that Albania will follow in the road of independence and Europeanization, like the other Balkan states did before her, he is thinking about a way to keep this country spiritually linked to Orient. This is his mission, not only for the sake of Albania, but for keeping alive the idea of an Oriental conquest of Europe. The solution lies in the Asiatization of Albanians by themselves, after the end of the Ottoman sovereignty over their country. This can be accomplished if they plant an Oriental-minded leader in Albania.

*A hodja* instead of a prince [Skanderbeg] is what this country needs, - he continued. - When Asia will contract and become like a seed, like they saw the universe contracts in its cosmic cycles, so when Asia will contract in this country, it will find shelter in his body. Let our laws, slavery and minarets collapse, it suffices that they will exist within the brain of that man. Because the day will come when, like the diminished universe that swells again, the contracted Asia will swell as well, together with handcuffs, anxiety and tyranny. Do you get it, Beqir Ali? In the

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1 Alb.: ..atë çka fshihnin sytë ose goja e nxirrte trupi lakuriq... Atje dilte ambicja dhe epshi, mëdyshja dhe gatishmëria për të mos u ndalur para asgjëje, tmerrit i fshehtë, pendesa apo synimi për të shkelur mbi kufoma.

brain of that man and nowhere else we will plant our seed (ibid.: 113-114; emphasis added).<sup>1</sup>

Several indicators in the story make it clear that this conversation happened in the early morning of the day dated October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1908, which is the birthday of Enver Hoxha, who would become the communist dictator of Albania. Also the religious title of *hodja*, or imam, in the citation above actually spells out his family name, as well as tells about a supposedly Islamic influence in his upbringing. Therefore, Kadare's story foresees that the future communist leader will embody the Oriental, Islamic and anti-Christian spirit of the defunct Ottoman Empire and, as a consequence, he will isolate Albania from Europe. The totalitarian communist regimes imagined their society as an organism that has to be nurtured and kept healthy through social prophylaxis from its enemies, which were imagined as parasites, viruses of cancers of body politic. The experience of communism demonstrated the highest concentration of power in the political leaders like Stalin, Mao Tse Tung and Hoxha, to the extent that each of them could say that "I am the society" (Lefort, 1993: 93). The corruption of their minds and bodies meant the decadence of their societies. Kadare's story anticipates that the cancer or the virus is the body of the leader itself that would infect the whole society. Thus, Kadare mocks the modernizing ethos of socialist Albania, by pointing out that communism was a retrograde regime and a historical continuation of the "Oriental despotism" in Asia. Moreover, he was puts forward the idea that the ideology and the policies of communist regime in Albania were deeply influenced by the Islamic family background of its leaders, an idea which is characteristic of Orientalism of many public intellectuals in post-communist Albania (Sulstarova, 2013).

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1 Alb.: - Një hoxhë në vend të princit, ja ç'i duhet këtij vendi, - vazhdoi tjetri. Kur Azia të tkurret, të bëhet sa një bërthamë, ashtu siç thonë se tkurret gjithësia në ciklet kozmike, kur Azia pra të tkurret, në këtë vend, ajo do të strehohet e gjitha, në qënien e tij. Le të rrenohen ligjet tona, skllavëria dhe minaretë, mjafton që ato të jenë në trurin e atij njeriu. Sepse do të vijë dita, kur ashtu siç bymehet prapë gjithësia e zvogëluar do të shpërthejë e do të bymehet gjithë Azia e tkurrur: prangat, ankthi, tirania. Nuk e di nëse më kuptove, Beqir Ali. Në trurin e një njeriu dhe askund tjetër ne duhet të lemë bërthamën tonë.



### Homosexuality and servitude

The Western travelers to the Orient have remarked that it was a libertine place in respect to homosexual relations. Homoeroticism became a part of the exotic description of the Orient and it was included in the broader rubric of Oriental depravity or lustfulness. Until the effect of such descriptions, many Western homosexuals used to travel to the Eastern colonies purposely to experience a more liberated sexuality than it was the case in their own countries. Nevertheless, some Orientalist, like Richard Burton, wrote that homosexuality was a natural vice in the East, while men in the West were deemed incapable of this practice (Boone, 1995: 91).

The readers of this paper have already got the hint that homosexuality in the novels of Kadare is practiced by Oriental characters. A literary critic, Tefik Çausi has observed that Kadare links homosexuality with “negative characters, with foul and perverted people” (Çausi, 2004: 216).<sup>1</sup> One such character is Kus Baba in the novel *The Black Year*. He leads the Muslim fanatic rebels who are against the independence of Albania from the Ottoman Empire. Çausi describes the character of Kus Baba as the “representative of those forces that want to cover Albania with the obscurantist scum of Anatolia” (1994: 190).<sup>2</sup> From the novel we learn that Kus Baba’s lover Vasillaq had been killed out of jealousy by another man and since that black day Kus Baba did not find comfort (Kadare, 2003: 62-63).

Kadare in his essay about the European identity of Albanians sees “Oriental homoeroticism”, especially pederasty, as part of the Asian and Islamic cultural influences, brought by the Ottoman Turks in Albania and associates this perverted forms of sexuality with a calculated program to install the spirit of submission and servitude. By discussing homoerotic motives found in Albanian poetry written with the Arabic alphabet during the Ottoman period, Kadare ironically says that if they were about “normal” homosexuality, then this phenomenon could be used by Albanians as proof of their untimely emancipated attitude towards homosexuality in Europe. But in so far that we are dealing with love of older men for young boys

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1 Alb.: ...pederastinë shkrimtari e lidh me personazhe negative, njerëz të ndytë e përvërsë.

2 Alb.: Është përfaqësues i atyre forcave që duan ta mbulojnë Shqipërinë me llum ob-skurantist anadollak.

(pederasty), then these literary motives constituted an “anti-culture”, whose aim was to morally corrupt the Albanian people. Under the effect of poetry and songs that praised pederasty, several generations of effeminate Albanian men would be enough to erase the very ideas of national identity and liberty in the Albanian people, but the Albanian national culture was capable to withstand this attack and this kind of immoral literature remained marginal to degenerate and Ottomanized quarters (Kadare, 2006: 27-30). Thus, Kadare connects the homosexuality with immature bodies with the political subjectivity. His thinking parallels that of the ancient Greeks, for whom pederasty was morally acceptable, but homosexual prostitution was socially permitted only to the slaves or foreigners with no citizenship. In Athens and in Rome it was morally unacceptable for free-born men to acknowledge the authority of a leader who in his youth violated his body and let himself be a passive pleasure object for others (Foucault, 1990: 218-220; Garton, 2004: 32-35). It looks like Kadare is arguing along similar lines: he makes the national independence of Albanians depended on the ideas of manhood, courage, individual freedom etc. These ideas require the recognition of equal dignity in the relationship between Albanian men, something which is found in the articles of customary law, which Kadare puts forward as a proof of the European character of Albanian culture. As a consequence, the sexual domination implied by the homoerotic relations with young boys is not feasible for the equal dignity between men. It cannot be a European, or an autochthonous feature of Albanian society, so it must be a minor and isolated Oriental import during the Ottoman period. In short, effeminate men and sexual perversities are akin to Oriental despotism, while manliness is akin to the Europe and freedom. As Kadare’s aim in the essay is to argue for the European identity of the Albanians, then pedophilia is used by him to mark an ultimate and impassable border that separates morality from immorality, Albanian culture from the Turkish one, and Europe from Asia.

### **Concluding remarks**

Many literary works and essays of Ismail Kadare are deeply political in nature, not only because of their themes, but also because of the ideas that they transmit to the reading public. A general theme of his novels, especially of those whose plots take place in the historical periods of the Albanian people, is the resistance of the Albanian nation to powerful foreign

empires and oppressive regimes. Despite the fact that the bulk of his literary work was created during one of the most oppressive totalitarian regimes in Europe, Kadare managed sometimes to write subtle critiques against the communist regime. To achieve this he had to situate his characters and events in the distant historical past. The Ottoman Empire provided an appropriate setting, because it was the former invader of Albania and was generally held responsible for his backwardness and separation from the developments in Europe. Moreover, since Enlightenment, the Western Orientalism has taken the Ottoman Empire as the prime example of “Oriental despotism”, which in the writing of such intellectuals like Montesquieu, Marx or Weber, referred not only to a type of political system, but also a type of society which was characteristic of Asia. In such Asian societies the ruler stands above the law and has limitless power over his subjects whom he treats as his slaves. Such types of societies are static over time and cannot easily change from within. Although “Oriental despotism” was coined during the intellectual debates within Europe about the powers of the monarchy and the rights of citizens and it was in fact a caricature of the Ottoman Empire and other Eastern empires, it has proved to be a powerful theoretical device to build an unsurpassable difference between Europe and the Orient.

Although Kadare does not explicitly refer to “Oriental despotism” in his works, the picture of the Ottoman Empire found in his novels and essays is the same as the model. In his literary laboratory he could turn the Ottoman Empire as the precursor of the modern dictatorial and totalitarian states. According to him, the common link between them was the state bureaucracy, under whose weight the individual subjectivity and liberty was crushed. Thus, he could use this image of the Ottoman Empire to criticize both the historical empire together with contemporary and modern “bureaucracy” that had ruined the revolutionary socialist spirit of the Soviet Union. This kind of a critique was permitted after the break of Albania with the Soviet Union. Ultimately, the intelligent readers could read between the lines of a couple of his novels a critique of the communist Albania itself.

This article focused on the Kadare’s use of bodies to build images of the cruel and oppressive Ottoman Empire, and to convey a sense of commonality of Albanians and other Balkan peoples with Europe, as opposed to the Asian mentality and culture of the Turks. In the above, we saw the juxtaposition of Albanian and Ottoman dresses, the politics of the veil in the European part of the empire, the horrendous spectacle of the heads in the assimilated regions

of the empire, the state control over sleep and dreams of its subject, the embodiment of the Islamic spirit of the Ottomans in the future communist leader of Albania, and the Ottoman project to ruin Albanian manhood, subjectivity and freedom, through the intrusion of motives of Oriental homoeroticism in the folklore and cultivated poetry with Arabic alphabet. The fact that these motives and other similar ideas are spread over his literary output and essayistic work, speaks about how Orientalist stereotypes, which really abound in Albanian intellectual and popular cultures, pass from historiography to fiction and from fiction to political essays. They continue to mould the perceptions of contemporary Albanians about their national history and present realities.

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KUFIJ TË TRUPIT POLITIK

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AUX LIMITES DU CORPS POLITIQUE

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EXPLORING THE LIMITS OF POLITICAL BODIES



## A Death of One's Own: Sovereignty at its Limit

PAO-WEN TSAO

### **Abstract**

While stating in plain words that modern politics is characterized by the irreducible indistinction of the realm of bare life and that of the political, Giorgio Agamben in a rather less conspicuous passage in this introduction for his book *Homo Sacer* said that “When its borders begin to be blurred, the bare life that dwelt there frees itself in the city and becomes both subject and object of the conflicts of the political order, the one place for both the organization of State power and emancipation from it.” But the latter was not followed up on with the same clarity.

This paper is not an attempt on verifying this claim about the possibility of emancipation ; rather, it is an inquiry into this indistinct political realm seen from the point of view of bare life, and an exploration of the limit of sovereign power at the point of death. Starting by contemplating an incident of self-immolation as an exemplar, this paper proposes a model of two coinciding deaths, by which it asks about how and why these self-imposed bare life bodies threaten or ridicule State power, triggering State measures that while being incapable of securing effective prohibitions, bring about the realization of ‘life capable of being killed but not allowed to be sacrificed’. Behind the ban on martyrdom and suicide lies the tension of the confrontation between



state power and the body, and this tension is precisely that which needs to be captured and thought from a different perspective—one that lays eyes on the complete submission of the body that somehow happens to expose the emptiness of power. By the same token, this paper suggests a kind of political resistance that is not one that leads to the empowerment and freedom of bare life as a subject, but rather one that reveals the moment in which power ultimately loses its object.

Keywords : Agamben, bare life, death, suicide, the death penalty, sovereign power.

### **Two Coinciding Deaths**

On February 27<sup>th</sup> 2009, a young Tibetan monk lit up his gasoline-soaked robes and held up a Tibetan flag within the flames in the marketplace of Ngawa Town. His religious name was Lobsang Tashi, but was better known as Tapey, and he was believed to be the first among 135 Tibetan self-immolators in China that were recorded until now. Whether found alive or dead at the scene, these self-immolators all ended up in very similar circumstances, that is the Chinese officials and police intervened and took their persons or bodies into custody, the whereabouts of many are still unknown. Although not so different from the rest in nature, and perhaps for this reason capable of standing out as an ‘exemplar’, the case of Tapey will be used as a paradigmatic case for the purposes of this paper. What is remarkable in this case, is that the police fired several shots and took the monk down when his body was already on fire. It was as if the death of the monk was prohibited by means of another death, or as if the two deaths were caught in a contest.

The scene perfectly demonstrates, in its concreteness, some fundamental aspects of the relation between life/death and sovereign power, a topic which this article is trying to rethink and question once again, but from a different point of view. To begin with, what is the importance of the subject’s life and death to sovereign power? Clearly, as this case shows, it is not death itself that matters to the state, nor does life. If they did matter, the state would just comfortably accept the suicidal death of the one it wishes to exclude, or on the other hand try to save him and keep him alive for its own interest. But then this assumption that seems obvious at first sight begins to turn awry. If it

is not the living or dying of the subject that the state is concerned with, why did it response with such a violent reaction at that very instant? As we start to consider it more closely, it becomes more paradoxical to us to the extend that the two deaths seem to coincide and unfold a single moment, in which what is at the core of the sovereign power turns out to be just what is not.

Secondly, assume that the police took action because there was something at stake in the situation. What can we say about the nature of this action and its relation to the situation it deals with? Does it mean that the life of the subject and sovereign power are antagonistic to one another or interdependent? It is believed that the power of death is able to rule because no one prefers to die. Problem emerges when a person autonomously seeks death, which renders the punishment of death in an awkward position. Indeed, this punishment without meaning only expose its existence as superfluous when it can no longer function as a means to close up the structure of sovereign power, when it fails to restore what has been previously infringed upon. What then can we know about the nature of sovereignty from this situation? What can we learn about sovereignty when what it fails to do is precisely what it constitutes itself as being capable of doing?

This is perhaps a perfect point to review once again, from a different perspective, the well-known formula that Foucault proposes in *The History of Sexuality*—"One might say that the ancient right to *take* life or *let* live was replaced by a power to *foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death." (Foucault 1978, 138) —and note that in this sentence quoted it is not 'life' nor 'death' but the verbs before them that are emphasized. More importantly, in this formula of the transformation of the old power of death to the new emerging mechanism of life management, there exists no such option as 'to *let* die' in the logic of power. Although the old sovereign power and the new bio-power deal with death very differently, it should be clear that for both death functions as a limit, not only in terms of circumscribing a political realm, but also of a threshold element immanent in power that channels it back to life:

In any case, in its modern form— relative and limited— as in its ancient and absolute form, the right of death is a dissymmetrical one. The sovereign exercised his right of life only by exercising his right to kill, or by refraining from killing; he evidenced his power over life only through the death he was

capable of requiring. The right which was formulated as the 'power of life and death' was in reality the right to take life or let live. (136)

As for the modern form of power,

[...] it is over life, throughout its unfolding, that power establishes its dominion; death is power's limit, the moment that escapes it; death becomes the most secret aspect of existence, the most 'private'. (138)

Death is never power's object, it is never a realm in which power thrives, even though we say that power dominates over life, molding its span and is therefore able to determine the time for its end.

The third part of our questions, is how and why the suicidal protester's act could bring these issues to the foreground. Just as the state expresses its concern about its authority by way of various considerations of its subjects' lives, and not every one of them emerges as in need of its attention; so one could kill oneself for all kinds of reasons and in all kinds of ways, and not all of those situations render the state's position controversial, as in the case we are examining now. It is therefore important to stress that the suicidal death in question here is not just any kind of suicide, specifically with respect to its relation with the sovereign power. The feature that interests us here, is not whether it takes place in public as a spectacle, whether it contains a political claim, or whether it is used to accuse the state of anything. The person who kills him or herself doesn't do so merely because they are living an unbearable life, but rather because the life they are living is outweighed by death insofar as it is recognized as a life fully captured by sovereign power. With or without conscious awareness of it, or whether there is any attempt to resist it, this death evidences this fact by actually undergoing it through the body, to such an extent that the suicide might as well be just a review of what it means to be a living death, and that the difference between killing oneself autonomously and letting oneself to be killed barely matters. It is this kind of death, and the way in which it forms, together with the punishment of death that no longer really functions as a punishment, the model of the two coinciding deaths, that unfolds before us a specific moment for further inquiry into the limit of sovereign power. What can we say about this final feeble utterance of life that embodies sovereignty in its corpse?

Through the model of the two coinciding deaths, this paper is attempting to explore the three questions mentioned above and the relation between the right of death (the death penalty), and the body that exposes and therefore challenges the sovereign power by a total submitting to death (suicide). The intention here is not to provide some general arguments (if there ever is any) about suicide and its consequence for sovereign power, nor to suggest that the sovereign's right to kill inheres in every aspect of political life; but to frame out a specific sphere or moment from which we could capture the characteristics of both power and life as they present themselves at their extremes and for this very reason risk a fundamental change. The model is set up to recognize power's limit at the very edge of its ultimate display of might, and thus to realize that the body threatening not to live under its captivation is also located at the same crux. As we unfold interpretations in this direction, it also becomes clear that Tapey is only a literal case of this model, and that he is not alone in this respect.

This paper can also be seen as an attempt to contemplate the mysterious yet interesting passage on the notion of bare life that Agamben has brought up in the preface of *Homo Sacer* (1998) but did not quite follow up on in the rest of the book:

When its borders begin to be blurred, the bare life that dwelt there frees itself in the city and becomes both subject and object of the conflicts of the political order, the one place for both the organization of State power and emancipation from it. (9)

To simplify for the moment, it is a question about how we understand the possibility of resistance, or whether it could be understood as resistance at all, and how it could be imaginable with all its stakes and potentials. To understand this aspect of bare life status in any protest action, is to not dwell in the level of contesting discourses and ideas, and to not deem the body as merely emblematic, but as a corporal being that is always already politicized.

## Two Kinds of Suicide

A look at Roman law on its provisions concerning suicide would draw a lot more implications on our attempt to distinguish a certain type of suicide in order to clarify the relation of sovereign power and death. First of all,

contrary to the Christian tradition and all legal systems in the history that were influenced by this tradition, suicide in Roman law is not by nature a problematic act that has to be dealt with; it does not necessarily contain malice or sinfulness as it does in Christianity. In *Justinian's Digest*, not only is there no independent chapter dealing specifically with suicide, but it can hardly be said to have independent legal consequences directed against the practice of self-killing itself. Rather, its position is more likely to be one of many factors that may have effects on, and alter the outcome of, a given legal relation. As we read more carefully and compare all passages on suicide in the *Digest* that are scattered in different chapters dealing with different subjects, we will find that the reason that the taking place of suicide could change a legal situation often has to do with a shift of the status of a legal subject. In other words, we will see that the real problem of suicide in Roman law is not about allowing or prohibiting a certain act, but about different lives that are incorporated in law and presented as different legal subjects. What is in need of our attention is the way that the nature of the act is juridically recognized and what it amounts to within a relationship between the life and the authority by which it is captured. For that matter, we find that there are always two kinds of suicide laid down by the law in every situation, distinguished basically by different motives.

Take for example, the laws on succession and will. When dealing with whether a will is effectual or whether a person has a lawful heir, it is essential that the person in question maintain citizenship at the time of his death. The loss of citizenship renders his will ineffectual, and his property shall go to the imperial treasury after his death. For someone who is subject to capital charge or deportation but dies before the punishment has been carried out, the time at which he loses citizenship is certainly an issue to be settled in order to clarify the legal effect of his will and the disposition of his bequest. According to a passage of Ulpian, "if someone has been condemned to capital punishment, to fight with beasts or to be beheaded, or condemned to another punishment which deprives him of life, his testament will become ineffectual and that not as at the time when he is killed, but when he comes under sentence. [...] The will of someone who is deported will not be made ineffectual immediately, but when the emperor has confirmed the act; for it is then also that he suffers a change of civil status." (*Justinian's Digest*, 28.3.6) Therefore, if he dies before the sentence is confirmed, which is the time when his civil status changes, his will is effectual. However, if he dies by suicide,

the situation requires yet another distinction. Ulpian explains in the same passage:

For *constitutions* make ineffectual the wills of those who have chosen to die rather than be condemned, on account of their consciousness of having committed a crime, although they die still citizens; but if someone [chooses to die] because tired of life or unable to bear ill-health or as a gesture, like some philosophers, their situation is such that their wills are valid. And in a letter to Pomponius [Pompeius] Falco, the deified Hadrian laid down that this distinction applied to a soldier's will also, so that if he chose to die on account of his consciousness of having committed a military crime, his will should be ineffectual; but if it was because he was tired of life or because of pain, his will is valid, or if he died intestate, his [belongings] are to be claimed for his cognates, or if there are none, for his legion. (*Justinian's Digest*, 28.3.6)

Suicide is distinguished into two kinds: one that results in the same consequence as being condemned even before the condemnation is confirmed, and the other that leaves unchanged the principle that one who dies before being sentenced has lawful will and heir. The criteria of distinguishing them, is whether he chose to die out of consciousness of having committed a crime, or whether he just could not bear to live.

This distinguishing of different motives corresponds to the constituent elements required for committing a crime. Another passage written by Marcian explicitly aligns the committing suicide out of consciousness of guilt with the confession of the crime, and equates the death or wounds results from it with the sentence carried out by oneself:

Accused persons who have been arraigned or who have been caught red-handed, and have committed suicide from fear of the impending charge, leave no heir. Papinian, however, in the sixteenth book of his Replies, has written to the effect that the property of those who lay hands on themselves when they have not been arraigned as defendants on a criminal charge is not forfeited to the imperial treasury; for it is agreed that *it is not the wickedness of the deed that is subject to punishment, but that the fear resulting from guilty knowledge is taken in an accused [who commits suicide] to be as if he had confessed*. Accordingly, they must either have been arraigned or caught in the act for their property to be confiscated if they kill themselves. [...] However,

the deified Antoninus wrote in a rescript that if someone puts an end to his life through *taedium vitae*<sup>1</sup> or unendurable pain of some kind, or otherwise, he has a successor. [...] But this distinction is made, that *a person's motive for committing suicide is relevant, as when the question is raised of whether a soldier who has attempted suicide but has not carried it through should be punished, as if he carried out sentence on himself.* (Justinian's Digest, 48.21.3)

Although the laws discussed here is basically dealing with the validity of a will and succession, and the distinction of motives seems to function as a criterion to differentiate what each person deserves according to his deeds, the implications of this regulation resonates less in the will and succession than in the logic of the authority in condemnation. It only becomes clearer, when we compare with the situations and the manners in which the law prohibits suicide in the case of slaves and soldiers, that this distinguishing of motives has actually less to do with granting what one deserves, than securing what the authority has interests in, which is, again, not the life or death itself.

The fact that it is believed that Roman law doesn't punish suicide except for slaves and soldiers has its reasons, but is at the same time misleading, in a way that it attaches the forbidding of an act only to certain identities. What this view has ignored is that for these two kinds of people there are, likewise, two kinds of suicide distinguished according to different motives, which have very different juridical implications, and that the meticulous interpretations by the jurists in distinguishing them are not so much about exempting the kind that the law would have mercy on, as about determining the kind that concerns the authority over their lives— the authority that is expressed through their legal identities as slaves and soldiers. In other words, the point here is again not whether suicide is punishable, but to confirm the limit and the way one can dispose of his or her life according to his or her legal status. Consider these passages about soldiers under the chapter 'Military Law' and 'Punishment':

Paul, *Views, book 5*: [...] A soldier who has attempted suicide but has not carried it through must suffer capital punishment, unless he did so because of unbearable pain or sickness or some sort of grief or for some other cause in which case he is to get a dishonorable discharge. (*Justinian's Digest*, 48.19.38)

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1 Weariness of life.

Arrius Menander, *Military Law*, book 3: Every disorder committed to the prejudice of the common discipline is a military offense, as, for example, the crime of idleness, or of willful disobedience, or of sloth. [...] If a man has wounded himself or has attempted suicide in some other way, the Emperor Hadrian wrote in a rescript that the circumstances of the matter should be established, so that, if he had preferred to die out of inability to bear pain, or *taedium vitae*, or disease, or madness, or shame, the death penalty should not be inflicted on him, but he should receive a dishonorable discharge; but if he could put forward no such excuse he should suffer capital punishment. The capital penalty should be remitted to those whose misconduct was due to drink or jest, and change of service imposed. (*Justinian's Digest*, 49.16.6)

Marcian, *Accusers*, *sole book*: [...] For he should by all means be punished unless he was compelled to do so<sup>1</sup> by *taedium vitae* or unendurable pain of some kind. And it is right that he should be punished if he has laid hands on himself without good cause; for he who has not been merciful to himself will much less be merciful to another. (*Justinian's Digest*, 48.21.3)

For a soldier to be punished for committing suicide, it doesn't require him to be accused of committing a previous crime, let alone to have a sense of guilt that should be taken as a confession. He is subject to death penalty once he tries to kill himself, except if he wants to do so out of *taedium vitae*, weariness of life. The reason laid out by Marcian for this— “ he who has not been merciful to himself will much less be merciful to another”— seems morally reasonable, but not juridically convincing, since it doesn't explain why it is applied only to soldiers but not normal citizens. Arrius Menander's interpretation that places suicide under the general clause “every disorder committed to the prejudice of the common discipline is a military offense” seems to make more sense, since a soldier's life and his obedience is inseparable with the constituting of a military force. However, the military order that is infringed by the person who attempted to end his life is not restored by keeping him alive, but by punishing him to yet another death.

But perhaps none of these questions concerning the reasons behind punishing suicide are more disturbing than the fact that not every kind of suicide is subject to death penalty. The understanding and recognition that

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1 To commit suicide.



the law gives to the suicide out of *taedium vitae* only exposes in a greater contrast that the real motive of the other kind that the law punishes is not only irrelevant, but also unthinkable. Eventually, it is not life itself that the law aims to regulate, but the way that it is referred back to the law.

According to the above passages in the *Digest*, it is clear that the Roman law does not necessarily deem it juridical significant how one disposes his or her life. Criteria are laid down to interpret the constitution of such act in legal terms, whether through the motive or the way it is committed. However, the real distinction exists between whether or not a suicidal death amounts to an usurpation or an escape of the right that the emperor could probably claim over his or her life. We can say that suicide is punished only when there is an existing right of the emperor over the person's life (or when the existing of this right is probable), and the problem is to determine whether that right is infringed. Hence, in order to preserve this right in all possible circumstances, the committing suicide of a condemned is deemed as a confession of his crime, this way the death preceding the sentencing or the execution of capital penalty shall not eliminate the emperor's right that can otherwise decide this death. Similarly, the suicide of a soldier renders himself in the same position as desertion for the empire.

It is worth noting how the Roman law illustrates the suicide that it distinguishes from the other kind of self-killing which is out of *taedium vitae*, weariness of life. Compared to the latter, the law has much less to say about the kind of life that the former intends to end. According to the jurists in the *Digest*, this type of suicide is often referred to as distinguished from the other, either as a principle that has its exception in *taedium vitae*, or as the exception among self-killings that are generally assumed to be out of *taedium vitae*. At most, it is described as having a sense of guilt, and that it is this sense of guilt—neither the action, nor the consequence—of the suicide that is to be punished or to have effects on the pending charge. This description, however, is itself already a juridical judging, and it refers to the knowledge and the disagreement that the person committing suicide has against the law. In other words, instead of its being alive or dead, this life (or death) is recognized by the law only through what is already juridical significant. The punishing of this specific kind of suicide manifests the paradigm of the tautology that the law recognizes only what it regulates, and punishes only what it is threatened by. This non-recognition of life itself through juridical lens is what makes the

already dead punishable, or to put it differently, what makes the death penalty imposed on a person seeking death capable of functioning as a punishment. Once again, we see here the model of the two coinciding deaths.

By way of replacing the suicidal death for one that is sanctioned by the authority, the juridical structure that is thus closed up arrives, however, at an absurd point of its logic from the point of view of the life that it is supposed to regulate. For the life that would rather render itself dead, the law has just so much to mobilize, that the only thing it can do is to declare once again the right of its death that is already beyond its power to realize. And while the law weighs very differently the suicide that challenges the authority with the cost of life from the suicide in hope for a way out of an unbearable life, how different exactly are the two in the face of the fact that there is really only one intention and one goal for the person committing suicide: to die.

If in the case of soldiers we see how life is comprehensible through juridical terms, then in the case of slaves, whose characteristics in Roman society oscillate between property and human being, we see on the contrary the need to recognize all kinds of details and probables of the biological aspect of life. Before looking into this, it should be noted first that slavery is deemed equivalent to the death of a civil life. Ulpian, *Edict*, book 48: "We should understand a person condemned on a capital charge [as condemned] on grounds for which the appropriate [punishment] for the condemned is death or loss of citizenship or slavery." (Justinian's Digest, 48.19.2) This means that our comparison of the laws of suicide enters into a different level of life conditions, which has its beginning in already a certain kind of death. Yet concerning its second death, the biological one, the analogy of the two kinds of suicide still applies, which lays bare in a greater extent the at once coincidental and antagonistic relation between the life that is borne by the body, and the life that is recognized by the law.

Under this rationale, suicide of a slave is just something that is not completely avoidable. As 'wicked' as it may be, it could happen just like goods might have defects, and when it happens it should be dealt with directly, just as every other terms and obligations between a vendor and a buyer, or a master and a slave. The edict of curule aedile prescribes that the vendor should disclose every defect of a slave upon making a sale, and by defect it means all kinds of diseases, disabilities, abnormalities, mental conditions,

and runaway history that might be relevant to serve the purpose of slavery, including “any attempt which he has made upon his own life.” (*Justinian’s Digest*, 21.1.1) If any of these circumstances is not declared upon selling, the aediles will grant an action of rescission, which once effected should restore both parties to the position they would have been had the sale never been made. This means the purchaser, besides returning back the slave, has to compensate for the vendor any decrease in value of the slave occurred under his possession; which does not include, however, the case that the decrease in value is caused by the slave’s committing suicide or a capital offense. In other words, the reduction in value of a slave that is caused by his or her committing suicide is fairly recognized, both before and after the sale; but the act itself is hardly seemed to be attributable to whom he or she is owned. Another passage by Ulpian discusses the conditions under which a master can deduct what is owed by his slave from *peculium*, the property that a slave is permitted to have under the power of the master, before it is valued when a dispute is in progress. The question lies in whether a decrease in value caused by suicide is deductible; in other words, whether the slave should be (or is able to be) responsible for it. Here again, the answer is negative: the damage is acknowledged but cannot be complemented, any more than it can be said to be assumed by anyone, perhaps even the slave him or herself. But above all, what catches our attention in these legal reasoning are their wordings on suicide:

Ulpian, *Edict, book 29*: [...] The damage arising when a slave wounds himself is not a deductible item, any more than if he had committed suicide or thrown himself over a cliff; *for slaves are naturally allowed to do themselves an injury*. But if a slave with self-inflicted wounds is cared for by the master, I think the slave must pay the master what it costs, although it is true that a master who cares for a slave who has fallen ill is treated as looking after his own interests in the main. (*Justinian’s Digest*, 15.1.9)

Ulpian, *Curule Aediles’ Edict, book 1*: Now when rescission is effected, if the slave has been reduced in value, whether mentally or physically, by the purchaser, the latter will have to make this good to the vendor; illustrations would be the debauching of the slave of the fact of the purchaser’s cruelty making him a fugitive. [...] 1. The aediles direct that any acquisitions either way shall be restored so that when the sale is ended, neither party obtains more than he would have had if the sale had never been concluded. 2. An

exception to this is the slave who commits a capital offense. [...] 3. Also excepted is the slave who does something to end his life. *He is deemed a bad slave who does something to remove himself from human affairs, for example, he strangles himself or drinks a poisonous potion, casts himself from a height, or does something else in the hope of resulting death; it is as though there is nothing that he would not venture against others, who dares to do it against himself.* (Justinian's *Digest*, 21.1.23)

The descriptions of such behavior demonstrate the slave as a mixture of a biological being that is unable to know the seriousness and to take responsibility of what he or she has caused, and a person with his or her own intentions that cannot be accounted for with other's standpoint. The fact that the purchaser has to make good of the reduction in value if his mistreating causes the slave to flee, but not if it brings about the slave to commit suicide, illustrates the distinguished status of the self decision upon one's life. But to say it is distinguished is not to stress the importance of life itself; rather, the life of a slave has its weight, beyond which suicide becomes irrelevant. A threshold exists between where life is important but does not belong to oneself, and where life belongs to oneself but is not anymore important. Thus, the significance of such practice is mindfully calculated yet at the same time remains largely mysterious, that apart from the pricing, there is no further correspondence in the law that responds to such deed as 'removing oneself from human affairs'. The suicidal death is itself impossible to think of for the law, unless it is equated to something else.

Perhaps this paradoxical way of seeing the suicide of a slave as both crucial and usual, and this blindness to life as it is, appears even more obviously in the confusion of whether a slave by ending his or her life amounts to a fugitive. This confusion presents itself as a juridical question of how to rightly determine the intention behind an act, and that only the co-existing of both the act and the intention can constitute an action that could be recognized by the law. However, the need to clarify the distinction of suicide and fugitive indicates that the first thing occurs to those it may concern is not the life of the slave, but the breaking away from control.

Ulpian, *Curule Aediles' Edict*, book 1: Ofilius tells us what a fugitive is: He is one who remains away from his master's house for the purpose of flight, thereby to hide himself from his master [...] It cannot even be said that a slave is a

fugitive who has come to the stage that he hurls himself from a height (though one could declare a fugitive one who goes up to a high point of the house to cast himself down); rather does he desire to end his life. Vivian also says that the common assertion, particularly of the ignorant, that a slave who stays away for a night is a fugitive, if it be without his master's consent, is not true; one has to assess the man's purpose in so acting [...] Caelius also writes that if you buy a slave who throws himself into the Tiber, he will not be a fugitive so long as his only motive was the desire to end his life; but if he first planned to run away and then, changing his mind, flung himself into the Tiber, he would be a fugitive; he says the same of a slave who throws himself from a bridge. And all that Caelius says is correct. (*Justinian's Digest*, 21.1.17)

What is the difference between hurling from a height, casting oneself from a high point of the house, and throwing oneself into the Tiber? Perhaps the confusion between fugitive and suicide is a real one, since one could argue how big a step does it take for a slave who desires to escape from his or her life to end up committing suicide. Yet their meanings for the law and the society are so vastly different: a fugitive aims to challenge the rule and the social order that are meant to have them chained; a slave who commits suicide is only disposing his or her own body that the law has no concern. Another passage on the definition of the suicide of a slave expresses this even more clearly, that if the slave's motive concerns only his body (and not the law), it cannot even be said to be a 'suicide':

Paul, *Curule Aediles' Edict*, book 1: [...] A slave acts to commit suicide when he seeks death out of wickedness or evil ways or because of some crime that he has committed, but not when he is able no longer to bear his bodily pain. (*Justinian's Digest*, 21.1.43)

This is equally saying that a slave commits suicide when he or she knows that he or she is committing suicide in juridical sense, but not when he or she is merely seeking death. At the end, besides *taedium vitae* and the consciousness of guilt, what exactly is this 'wickedness' or 'evil ways' to kill oneself, if not the deliberateness in resisting the law by taking away one's own life, or on the other hand fulfilling the law by rendering one's own death?

Suicide has different kinds: those who die alone for themselves and those who by dying touch the very stake of the authority— "Death is the only

meaning we have for the extreme penalty.” (Celsus, *Digest*, book 37; Justinian’s *Digest*, 48.19.20)—and this distinction stems not from the different qualities of real motives, but from the logic of the law. The structural analogy of the two kinds of suicide existing across citizens, soldiers, and slaves, indicates that what is in question is the juridical implications drawn from the way a person disposes his or her life, life that is already saturated with different juridical significances and serves different legal functions. And with the case of the slaves, whose lives are literally always being possessed, the difference between the two kinds of suicide begins to blur, right at the point where each of them is in its own extremity. At the peak of the sovereignty’s final means, we see the law while capturing life risks to expose itself as only capturing itself, as well as life that threatens the authority by paying its price with death.

### The Death Penalty

In his seminar on the death penalty, Derrida (2013) does not proceed his discussions in a course that starts from identifying the essence of this cold human machine and ends in justifying a standpoint of whether or not to reserve or improve it. Rather, he does the other way around: through detours of many literary works and eloquent discourses, he returns to and rethinks the death penalty by way of what the abolitionists and proponents argue differently, as well as what they do not realized that they share in common. ‘What is the death penalty?’ is a question for the abolitionists, since their efforts to terminate the death penalty in human history must found on the basis of what it is to them. It is also a question that sees the possibility for another version of human history, in which this machine would not any more be a necessity in the mechanism of law, and that an alternative that features a principle opposing it could be imagined. What is it that the abolitionists oppose to, and in the name of what? Has the core issue that characterizes the role of death penalty been made clear amid these arguments, or has it retreated to yet another disguise?

These questions are certainly too complicated to be answered completely. The two threads that Derrida returns to from time to time are ‘cruelty’ and ‘exception’, by which he examines the constellation of notions such as sovereignty, penal law, the law in general, right of life, and death etc., that the many literatures on death penalty have brought together. What is the ‘cruelty’ and ‘exception’ that marks the significance of death penalty, and

why is this important? Perhaps, amid all the clues that Derrida has proposed but not concluded, we should start with a simple question he has posed, that is how we are able to distinguish the death penalty from other kinds of deaths. ‘Death *tout court*’ is the term he uses, namely, all sorts of death no matter from natural reasons, murder, or suicide. What is the character that distinguishes the death penalty from all of them? If the abolitionists oppose to the death penalty because of its cruel and exceptional character, how are these characters different from those of other kinds of death?

We know that death itself is not the issue, nor is killing. Derrida makes this clear by pointing out that abolitionism is against death penalty, not against war. (2013, 54-5) Nor should the notion of cruelty remain at the level of the process and physical means of the execution—for example, the bodily torture and the spectacle—if so, the abolitionism would no longer have its standpoint today when most death penalties are carried out secretly and in ways that are the most effective and the least suffering. Ultimately, the specific kind of cruelty that characterizes the death penalty has to do with the fact that this is a death that is decided by others. The death penalty is cruel because even the most horrible murder can only contain a will to kill, and cannot ‘decide’ that one should die; it is cruel because it does not only requires one’s death but also one’s submission to this decision. It is a cruelty that is not out of danger, torture, or even fear, but out of being decided, out of a decision. Thus we see the intertwining of the two threads: cruelty and exception, the latter being precisely the logic of the sovereignty’s decision, according to Carl Schmitt.

Needless to say, the death penalty represents the sovereign power par excellence, the metaphor of the sword of the prince. However, this particular position that death penalty stands does not render itself only as a specific kind of death that has an additional character of being decided by the state; rather, the existence of the death penalty exemplifies the fact that the concept of death itself is fundamentally capable of being marked by the mechanism of distinction, which functions between human and animal, subject and bare life, or between a death to be recognized and a perishment that makes no difference from being alive. As Derrida says, drawing from Heidegger, that “only Dasein dies, only Dasein has [...] the right and the possibility of dying, whereas the animal stops living or perishes (*crève*) but never dies [...]” (2013, 150) In that political space that unfolds in the death, there is

always the question of arising above the natural and determining a certain stance of what it means to be human, and the mission of carrying it through. The death penalty in this sense realizes every precision of the death, from the sentence to the execution, from the way it is carried out to the time it is carried out, from an official identification of the executed to a clear-cut division of life and death. These are the terms not only which the state has a right to, but also which it needs to make efforts for— we only have to think about how difficult it is to keep death prisoners alive and even to save them back when they commit suicide, just in order to make sure they will die as the law prescribes. The death penalty is not the particular vis-a-vis the death in general; it is the battle field that emerges from the always ongoing politicization of the biological perishment in the structure of sovereignty, the metaphoric scene of torture that is depicted by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1977). Thus, while “there is no law or right that would not be or imply a right to death,” (Derrida 2013, 171) neither is there any death that could not be juridicalized, exceptionalized, or bearing a decision.

The role of the death penalty encounters its own paradox, when the death that is decided with such precision meets the autonomy of the person condemned to death. As we have repeatedly seen in previous discussions on suicide, the problem of death being the ultimate means of the state is that it is based on the simple presumption that no one would prefer to die, and consequently it could lose its functions if the person in question has literally nothing to lose in his or her life. For those motivated with a death drive, can the sovereign power capture them? Can the law ever do justice to those who murder just in order to receive death punishment? One might border this limit of the sovereignty by disposing his or her biological body. What happens when the decision of the other coincides with that of one self? What happens when one's submission to the law is in every bit full and complete, that it is impossible to tell whether this death is decided by the state or by oneself?

The death of Socrates may be one of the most famous cases that perfectly demonstrate this situation. Socrates was accused of refusing to recognize the gods recognized by the state and of corrupting the youth. Although it has rarely been thought that Socrates committed suicide, the question of whether he did so is often raised. The reason for this confusion (perhaps a rather ‘correct’ one) is not only that the Athenian jury sentenced Socrates to be his own executioner



and to take the poison hemlock by his own, but also and more importantly that he refused the opportunity to be sentenced to exile instead of death, as well as his friend Crito's offer to help him escape. The sacrificial character of his death was presented in two aspect: first, that he was guilty not for dodging what is right, but for pursuing what he believed to be the truth; and second, that he refused to escape from the death penalty not because he admitted that he was guilty, nor because he believed that the judgement has done justice to him, but because *he had chosen* to be a subject of the State and to obey her laws— an independent decision that makes the whole case of his criminality out of the question. Socrates had to die as much as he shouldn't have, since he had offended the people of Athens by resorting to a more divine law. However, this controversy got even more intensified, when he found himself to be bound to obey what he had freely agreed upon, notwithstanding what the accusations were, and decided that he should die as the State wanted him to. We see this point even in the arrangement in Plato's *Crito* (2011), that Socrates reasoned his own decision not in a first-person narrative, but in the narrative of the law. The law had decided Socrates' fate, but this decision was overruled and replaced by that of his own. On the contrary, and even more paradoxically, had Socrates escaped, he would remain forever in relation with the State's decision by being an outlaw.

### **Conclusion: the Cost of Death in Modern Politics**

Every one of us, every life borne by the body, is more or less, for better or worse, at once that which reloads and challenges the law. In every protesting practice that is suicidal or life risking such as self-immolating or hunger strike, whether it is out of religious believe, and whether it appeals symbolically or practically (for example, prisoners who commit suicide in order not to submit to the sentence), we see the structure of sovereignty of which the death of Tapey appears as the paradigm. By analyzing the relationship between suicide and sovereign's right of death, the model of the two coinciding deaths, we see on the one hand the life that is captured by the law, and on the other, the sovereignty that is at its limit. In this relationship of which the two aspects are at once overlapping and antagonistic, the body equivocates the law not by escaping from it, but by taking on the same road that the law prescribes. The resistance then, is a subtle task, and if it is ever effective, it is not because it draws a greater and higher force to fight against the power, but because it exposes the logic of the sovereignty.

Thus the two deaths coincide, but not just in any contingent way. Amid the ethos that are hard to tell whether out of extreme desperateness or radical determination, the suicidal death in question takes on the path to testifying the ultimate fulfillment of the sovereign power of death. By a fairly minute subtlety, this seeming submission par excellence of the body somehow happens to expose the emptiness of power, at the very height of its display of might, leading power to confront its own limit before death. As the illogical 'to *let die*' of the side of sovereignty coincides with the incomprehensible 'to *let kill*' of the side of bare life, we see a possible space in which bare life "becomes both subject and object of the conflicts of the political order, the one place for both the organization of State power and emancipation from it." (Agamben 1998, 9)

One of the most essential points that we have not yet adequately clarified in Derrida's discussion on the death penalty, is that he conceives of the exception par excellence not as the sovereign's decision on one's death, but its prerogative to pardon. Derrida cites a passage of Badinter, a French lawyer and an eloquent abolitionist, in which he stated: "There is no sentencing to death in justice. Only a death wish that moves from the criminal court up toward the prince. It is up to him to hear it or refuse to hear it. He is the almighty one." (Derrida 2013, 107) Although the prince does not select the one to be condemned, he is offered to make the final decision on whether to follow the judgement of the court or to pardon and let live. This right to pardon and the relation between the juridical mechanism and the authoritative one is very much in accord with the notion of *auctoritas* and its relation with *potestas* that Agamben discusses in *The State of Exception* (2008). In Roman jurisprudence, *auctoritas* inheres not in legal institution, but in person. In private law, it is the power in the person *sui iuris* that make valid the legal action of whom he is in charge of, for example when a father authorizes a contract made by his son. In public law, the *auctoritas* of the Senate grants legitimacy to the rule of the magistrates or the people. *Auctoritas* can only act on a given legal situation which itself has no power to create. It is distinct from *potestas* since it "seems to act as a force that suspends *potestas* where it took place and reactivates it where it was no longer in force. It is a power that suspends or reactivates law, but is not formally in force as law." (79) Together, the two form a binary and dialectic system, in which the normative and the anomic, the juridical and the metajuridical, and the law and life need one another in order to get the juridico-political machine into work. (86) It is

in this at once antagonistic and supplementary relationship of *auctoritas* and *potestas*, that one of Agamben's diagnoses of modern biopolitics lies:

As long as the two elements remain correlated yet conceptually, temporally, and subjectively distinct, [...] their dialectic— though founded on a fiction— can nevertheless function in some way. But when they tend to coincide in a single person, when the state of exception, in which they are bound and blurred together, becomes the rule, then the juridico-political system transforms itself into a killing machine. (86)

This machine that kills, in contrast to the guillotine, needs not anymore the judgement of the court, nor the authority to pardon of the prince. The spectacle of the execution of death penalty that was necessary for the sovereignty, the instant in which a state “best sees itself” and “acknowledges and becomes aware of its absolute sovereignty,” (Derrida 2013, 38) this self-recognition of the law through its decision over life, is no longer important in this killing machine. When Derrida, extending Kant's arguments, points out that “the death penalty marks the access to what is proper to man and to the dignity of reason or of human logos and nomos,” (32) and that there is something still worse than the death penalty, in which those who are like beasts don't even have the right to be condemned to death and to a burial place (32), we see the distinction that is no longer presented between life and death but between death and corpse (33) continues to exist in our time, when life reduces more and more to corpse and dying is less and less entitled to a legal name. In the modern world of which Agamben sees the paradigm in concentration camp, the state kills by way of all kinds of massive, systematic, life-related governing policies, causing large-scale impact on life conditions in general, without recognizing each life through the law and granting them a legal subject when die. The sovereignty determines our death without ordering it; it kills but does not take life, as the latter at least has an object.

On the other hand, parallel to this indiscriminate operation of the right to kill of the sovereignty, we see how in the age that is marked by what Foucault terms the power to foster life and the mechanisms of neo-liberalism, suicide dissolves into merely a private choice and a personal right (on which the legitimacy of euthanasia is also based) that no longer threatens the state as it could have. Incidents of suicidal protests don't cause that much sensational attention as before, if not vanish from the news. And although the sacrificial

motive of such protesters can be appreciated, it is not anymore in the position that enables the state power to be exposed. Heroicness is on the verge of extinction, and all that are left are private sad stories.

Perhaps along with this shift of paradigm of the sovereignty and power, the place in which bare life finds itself at the crux of both power operations and the position of emancipation has also changed. The analogy between our fate today and the slave in ancient Rome comes up even clearer, in a way that our life and death signifies less the political significance, and more the economic impact— we are more recognizable as a fugitive than as a person who commit suicide. And for those who worked in workshop places like Foxconn, where disciplines and regulations constituted the main part of their environment and saturated their bodies, and decided to walk up to the top of the building to quit this life, were they doing so out of *taedium vitae*, or as responding to or even protesting against the machine that have them captured? Or rather, the two blurs and their differences don't matter?

The reality is complicated, however, in a way that all of the above different paradigms can exist at the same time, though not necessarily acting in concert. During the past year (2013-14) in Taiwan, there were the suicide cases of Chang and Lyu, both of whom were, so to speak, killed by corrupted land expropriation projects that destroyed their ways of life. There has been an ongoing energy policy that relies on nuclear power plants with serious safety concerns, as well as an impending cross strait service trade agreement that would influence millions on economic, medical caring, food security, and labour conditions aspects. There was the activist Lin Yi-hsiung who chose to go on infinite hunger strike to protest against the life risking nuclear power energy policy, while the main-stream society and many politicians paid superficial respect to his 'personal choice'. And finally, at the peak of the hustling social mobilization triggered by all of the above issues, there was the state, which deciding that it needed more attention for its sovereignty, executed five prisoners in death row, two of whom were thought to be possibly innocent while NGOs had already initiated rescue campaign— still, there is the death that is decided by the law and that the authority did not pardon.

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## Sensory Threshold and Embodied Sociality: On the Political Use of the Autistic Body

YUAN HORNG CHU

### Abstract

This paper tries to look at the complex history of the evolving label of autism from the early 1940 to the present, including the psychoanalytical, the cognitive and biogenetic paradigms. The purpose of this paper is not to ascertain a definitive truth condition of autism, but rather to use the human difference and potential of autism as a critical frontier to question the taken for granted assumptions about shared humanity, normality, sociality, communication and understanding. The diagnosis of deficit, dysfunction, and disorder, seems more like easily accepted containments of those “infelicitous” situation in communication, as well as human differences; and the according treatments are often based on, and consolidating via appealing to, the dubious assumptions of a “normal” or “shared” humanity. This paper proposes to loosen up those dogmatic assumptions, and benefit from the open up potentials of human difference.

*How to accept that what is obvious to us may not be so for others? How many ways, on how many levels, do we discover the inaccessibility of another mind?*

—Czeslaw Milosz, *The Land of Ulro*

*Ironically, the way that I move when responding to everything around me is described as “being in a world of my own,” whereas if I interact with a much more limited set of responses and only react to a much more limited part of my surroundings people claim that I am “opening up to true interaction with the world.”*

—Amanda Baggs (2007 Video) *In My Language*

### **“Communication Breakdown” and the Autistic Ego in Psychoanalysis**

During the middle of the twentieth century with the rise of psychoanalysis, Bruno Bettelheim, the most well-known and influential experts on child psychopathology in the world, stated in his book *The Empty Fortress* that “autism begins as a breakdown in communication” (1967:78). It was an atmosphere dominated by Freudian theory, and a profoundly held cultural belief was that parents are ultimately responsible for their children’s psychopathology. Bettelheim repeated the same claim: “Throughout this book I state my belief that the precipitating factor in infantile autism is the parent’s wish that his child should not exist” (1967: 125).

As a precursor to Bettelheim, Melanie Klein, appropriating Freudian theory, innovated the analysis of pre-Oedipal conflicts and their effect on the development of a balanced ego. In Klein’s analysis, the nursing infant experiences both pleasure and aggressive anxiety in relation to the breast. The infant’s conflicted relation to the nursing mother’s breast is represented to itself through introjection as “good” and “bad” objects, a representational process Klein described as “phantasy.” The infant later acquires the capacity to integrate these episodically based phantasies into a coherent image of the mother. This integration indicates a transition from the “paranoid-schizoid position” of the infant’s “pre-objective” phase to the phase of object relations Klein termed “depressive position.” According to Klein, the infant’s abilities to successfully negotiate and transcend the anxieties specific to both of these phases predict the presence or absence of psychotic illness in later childhood and adulthood (Klein 1975b).

Bettelheim adapted the Kleinian notion of the paranoid-schizoid position as a “fortress” created by the autistic child as defense against frustrations brought on by lack of appropriate care and/or “oversensitivity to the mother’s emotions” during critical periods of

development which may result in “delayed and possibly all-too-delayed ego formation”(1967: 398).

Klein’s framework of analysis was simultaneously appropriated by other famous psychoanalytical figures such as Donald Winnicott, Margret Mahler, and Francis Tustin. According to Winnicott, a transitional object that stands for the breast assists the infant’s process of ego development. This object of the first relationship functions to mediate phantasy and reality, enabling the infant to develop a differentiated sense of itself from its earliest phase of “unintegration.” The good mother who adapts to the infants enables the infant’s primary illusion that her breast is part of the infant and under its control. This initial complicity in fostering the illusion of the infant’s control is definitely vital for the infant’s ability to develop a differentiated ego, to a state of being “in relation to the mother as something outside and separate.” While for Winnicott, bad mothering, including the separation of mother and child during critical periods, led to psychopathology, and the development of a “false self” based on pathological defenses (cited in Nadesan 2005: 95-96).

Mahler introduced her idea of “symbiosis,” defined as “hallucinatory or delusional omnipotent somatopsychic fusion with the representation of the mother and, in particular, the delusion of a common boundary between physically separate individuals.” In this theory, the ego emerges out of an early infantile state of “normal autism” characteristic of this state of symbiosis, while Mahler believed the infant is driven to individuate itself from this delusory state of fusion. According to her framework, autism is a form of psychosis emerging when this process of ego differentiation, hinging upon the symbiotic process, goes wrong (cited in Nadesan 2005: 96).

Tustin began training as a psychotherapist at the Tavistock Clinic in the 1950s and published her first book *Autism and Childhood Psychosis* in 1972. She was ardent to apply the Kleinian vocabulary and mode of analysis to autistic children, enlisted ideas from Bettelheim, Mahler, and Winnicott. She found the source of autism in a disruption of normal ego development occurring in early infancy, in the infant’s failure to develop normal object relations due to a pathological failure on the part of the infant to differentiate itself from its illusion of symbiotic unity with the mother (symbiosis), or due to the infant’s pathological response to its experience of maternal separation. Tustin understood autism as a post-traumatic stress disorder, a defense mechanism stimulated by the infant’s unbearable traumatic experience of bodily separation from the mother. The autistic defenses, in the form



of auto-stimulation, involves what Tustin described as “autistic objects.” The over-use of autistic objects in a pathological way meant that they had sensation-dominated artefacts which impeded their approach to the outside world and barred the child from gradually developing a differentiated and differentiating medium for communication and interpretation which would help them through their loneliness in a more realistic way (1992: 117). Tustin’s work stands as the most prominent psychoanalytic method to autism at the turn of the century. Till her death in 1994, Tustin insisted that autism was a psychogenic disorder caused by cruel treatment by parents who were uncaring for their babies.

However, the psychoanalytical construction of autism, dominating from the 1940s through the 1960s, gradually lost favor in psychology, psychiatry, and in popular culture in general. We now know that children who are terribly neglected or abused do not become autistic (Grinker 2007: 83), and that the utility of psychoanalysis for therapeutic management of autism is highly limited (Volkmar 2000: 661). In retrospect, psychoanalytic treatment were often more harmful than beneficial. Stuart Murray (2012: 58) comments on Bettelheim’s idea and the damage done to those with autism: “Never have the ‘facts’ of autism proved to be so conclusively wrong. Many lives were ruined.” Today in most of the world, perhaps excepting France and Argentina, psychoanalysis becomes apparently irrelevant for autism on both ends: its psychogenic theory of etiology and its therapeutic treatment. Outside of psychoanalytic circle, its approach is no longer well known and is seldom cited in current autism research. The psychoanalytic metaphors of autism, such as pre-Oedipal conflicts, object-relations, post-traumatic stress, are now obsolete.

As for now, upon what interests do we review these outdated theories, assumptions, and terminologies on autism? Ian Hacking, a historian of science, in his book *Mad Travelers* told about a forgotten epidemic of insanity. He introduced the term “transient mental illness,” by which he meant an illness that appeared at a time, in a place, and later faded away; it might be selective for social class or gender, existed only at certain times and places. He refers to “hysteria” as an example, especially its florid French manifestations toward the end of the nineteenth century (1998: 1). Another example he investigated was “fugue”, a disorder of obsessive and uncontrollable wandering, an epidemic occurred in France and Germany but not in America, firstly appeared in 1886 and vanished after 1910. Hacking’s purpose was to

provide a framework in which to understand the very possibility of transient mental illness, specifically, the cultural niche in which it could thrive. For my purpose, not autism, but the “psychoanalytically constructed autism” dominant during the middle of the twentieth century, has been proved to be transient. And there was a cultural niche that made it possible.

### **Klein’s *Dick* and the Autistic Symbiosis in Psychoanalysis**

Melanie Klein’s 1930 paper “The Importance of Symbol-Formation in the Development of the Ego” reported a clinical case history, Dick, which later clinicians would see a case of autistic child. Klein’s case study of Dick has been reiterated and reinterpreted by numerous theorists of psychoanalysis, including Bettelheim, Tustin, and more prominently, Jacques Lacan (1988a, 1988b) and Julia Kristeva (2001). Dick was a four-years-old boy who was “slow,” could hardly speak, seemed indifferent to the presence or absence of his mother and nurse, displayed no emotion when he hurt himself, showed no affective relationship with objects around him. From his previous history, Klein suggested:

Possibly his development was affected by the fact that, though he had every care, no real love was lavished on him, his mother’s attitude to him being from the very beginning over-anxious. As, moreover, neither his father nor his nurse showed him much affection, Dick grew up in an environment rather poor in love. (1975a: 223)

Klein swiftly imposed the Oedipal interpretation in the initiating moment of the therapeutic intervention. Dick was interested in trains and stations and also in door-handles, doors and the opening and shutting of them. Klein interpreted that:

It really had to do with the penetration of the penis into the mother’s body. Doors and locks stood for the ways in and out of her body, while the handles represented the father’s penis and his own. Thus what had brought symbol-formation to a standstill was the dread of what would be done to him (particularly by the father’s penis) after he had penetrated into the mother’s body. Moreover, his defenses against his destructive impulses proved to be a fundamental impediment to his development. (1975a: 224)

Perceiving the effect of Dick’s lack of a symbolic relation to things, Klein started with this fundamental obstacle to establish contact with him. She showed him the toys: *Dick-little-train*, *Daddy-big-train...* *The station is*

*mummy; Dick is going into mummy...* After six months over Dick's analysis, Klein believed his development justified a favorable prognosis. She reported: "Finding access in this way to his unconscious, I succeeded in activating anxiety and other affects... In Dick's case, therefore, it is a question of modifying a fundamental factor in his development by means of analysis" (1975a: 229).

Today, most of those committed to autism research whose ideas were not psychoanalytical would most likely find Klein's Dick analysis downright nonsense, if not brutality of abusive imposition. Whereas within the tradition of psychoanalysis, the "extraordinary clinical insight" of Klein was praised by figure such as Kristeva: "a new continent of psychoanalysis has thus emerged in the wake of Freudian discovery, one that could not have taken hold without Melanie Klein's genius." And yet Klein's innovations, Kristeva appended, "it must be said, occasionally fell victim to dogmatism" (Kristeva 2001: 181). Those within psychoanalysis versus those without it, they were from different cultures or times. When meeting up as professionals in the field of autism, they could hardly talk to each other (Feinstein 2010: 93-94).

The autistic ego constructed by psychoanalysis was in its abstraction characterized as lacking embodiment. Moreover, the psychoanalytic discourse never simply produced the autistic ego but always simultaneously produced its "symbiosis" (echoing Mahler's jargon), namely, the semiotic link between "autism" and "frigid mothering." Klein, Winnicott, Mahler, Bettelheim, Tustin, without exception, all systematically exploited the concept of the uncaring bad mother. Psychoanalytic construction provided autism with a meaning which was invariably a moralistic one, that people with autism were socially impaired because they had abnormal or failed relationship with their parents, that cold parents produced cold children. This was where the stigma and shame came from. Parents, especially mothers, end up being blamed for autism. This was why for a generation or two, many parents were embarrassed and tried to hide their autistic children, as hiding a secret.

From the late 1940s until the mid-1970s, poor mothering and maternal absence were considered as the primary origin of psychopathology in children. Psychoanalysis in the United States thrived because of a preoccupation with self-improvement, the growth of child-guidance movements, and popular concerns about postwar changes in the American family (Grinker 2007: 93). While mother blame has been particularly prevalent in France because of the persistent sway of psychoanalysis, there exists a very different

cultural context. Jacques Donzelot's book, *The Policing of Families*, explored the reasons why psychoanalysis flourished in France. The term "infantile maladjustment" supplanted that of "irregular" in 1956 signals the deployment of psychoanalysis in the tutelary machinery. Psychoanalysis brought in a grid of analysis that made it possible to over-code categories of children derived either from the judicial sphere (delinquent children) or from the sphere of assistance (neglected and abused children). As an emerged grid of knowledge it invested different levels of communication between parents' behavior, the educative value of a family, the moral characteristics of children, and their pedagogical problems. With the help of psychoanalysis, the psychiatrist furnished educative action with a technique of intervention. As Donzelot put it, in the sphere of family in postwar France, there was a continual working-out of a discursive politics governed by psychoanalysis and serving as a support for all current techniques for management of relational life (1997: 198).

Here I am telling about a paradigm-shift in the conception of autism. However, it would be mistaken to suggest that the paradigm-shift has concluded. In France, in French speaking part of Switzerland and Belgium, in Argentina, where many professionals remain rooted in the thinking of Melanie Klein and Jacques Lacan, parents are still blamed for their child's autism. As one Swiss-French mother grumbled: "psychoanalysis is the only approach used, it's a true *diktat*" (cited in Feinstein 2010: 113-4). Even in Brazil, "just 10 years ago, an autistic child would be given a place in a school only on condition that the mother receive psychoanalytical therapy" (Feinstein 2010: 255).

### **Mind-blindness, Autistic Brain and Its Supposed Genetic Profiles**

As psychoanalytic paradigm slowly gave way to new perspective, new metaphors emerged. By the early 1990s, cognitive psychology began holding sway in studying and treating autism. From this perspective, the purpose of cognitive research is to identify the specific cognitive deficiencies in people with autism and, accordingly, link those deficiencies to the specific problems in the neural-anatomy of autistic people. Many experts believe that autistics seem emotionally remote and detached because they are mindreading-impaired. The "mind-blindness" theory implies that autism result from problems "innately" hard wired into the brain: autistic child lacks a mechanism that the normal child comes equipped with "for manipulating

representations of mental states” (Frith 1991: 19). Other researchers focused on the development of “joint attention” through the processes of which a shared social world could emerge. Most of the children diagnosed with autism exhibit disturbance in their ability to engage in joint attention. They either were unable to share experiences with others in his milieu or failed to recognize the others attending to an object, that, over time, could stymie language acquisition (Nadesan 2005: 119).

People labeled autistic have been particularly critical of the mind-blindness theory as vague, misleading, and inaccurate. They argued that theory-of-mind research demanded that participants have verbal abilities, attention and attention-shift skills, and information-processing as well as other capabilities that mimic the non-autistic person’s (Biklen 2005: 39). As long as theorists from cognitive psychology had not actually located a physical mechanism, their mind-blindness representation could only be metaphorical. Some of the autism research try to locate the specific cognitive deficiency and link it to a specific brain function believed impaired, for example, brain abnormalities of the amygdala. Research framework in the area of neuroscience, genetics, and evolutionary biology appear increasingly important and have multifaceted effects for the study of autism. Equipped with new imaging technologies such as fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) and PET (positron emission tomography), scientists endeavor to illustrate mental states with brain state, to identify the particular brain sites and processes involved in regulating and/or producing specific cognitive skills and/or emotions (Nadesan 2005: 145). For example, fMRI research suggests the amygdala may be involved in the brain’s processes of facial recognition and interpretation and thus involved in emotionality and sociability. The role of cingulate gyrus in facial recognition and in the capacities to engage in joint attention have also received considerable attention from cognitive researchers (Nadesan 2005: 153-154)

As neuroscientists try to link autistic mind with autistic brain, biogenetic scientists try to establish equivalences between brain states and gene states, for example, to study the role of a particular gene in mediating brain activation of the amygdala. They believe the discovery of distinct neural-chemical profiles of autistic people will lead to the discovery of the specific genes regulating these chemicals, which through their operation lead to autistic behaviors. Majia Nadesan, who has meticulously reviewed these approaches, rightly points out: the assumption that there are distinct autistic phenotypes and genotypes that can be causally identified and measured across populations

may be misguided. Most mental operations involved in perception, language processing, and sociality involve very complex neural operations that cannot be reliably represented in terms of isolated and specialized neural operations. It would be a mistake to presume that “autistic” behaviors or “cognitive styles” can be reduced to specific neural abnormalities. Likewise, it would be a mistake to ignore the “complex interactions occurring across neurological and social milieus (2005: 173).

Like the psychoanalytic paradigm held sway in the middle of the twentieth century had its cultural niche, the cognitive-biogenetic paradigm thriving in the late twentieth century has also rooted in a cultural milieu of the time. The development of the cybernetics model of information processing has driven the image of computer as an organizing metaphor of the mind. Anxious parents sought to apply “scientific” findings on child development in their personal projects of social engineering, to program their children with just the right skill and aptitudes required in an increasingly competitive and technical workplace. Parental and educational interest in the specifics of children’s cognitive development led eventually to more forms of social surveillance and contributed to the emergence of new forms of cognitive “difference” and psychopathology (Nadesan 2005: 108).

Various ways of “normalizing” autistic people are thus invented, including gene therapy, pharmaceuticals, and dietary interventions. Here Nicholas Rose has observed the emergence of novel patterns of biological activism around genetic and somatic understandings of selfhood. Genetic etiology is precisely what is contested in the biopolitics of mental disorders. Parent activism is to dispute suggestions that the conditions of their children have anything to do with social conditions or parental management. Invoking Gilles Deleuze, Rose vindicates that contemporary societies are no longer disciplinary, they are societies of controls.

The person, educated by disease awareness campaigns, understanding him-or-herself at least in part in neurochemical terms, in conscientious alliance with health care professionals, and by means of niche-marketed pharmaceuticals, is to take control of these modulations in the name of maximizing his or her potential, recovering his or her self, shaping the self in fashioning a life (Rose 2007: 223).

The boundaries between treatment, recovery, manipulation, and enhancement are blurred and entwined with the obligations of these new forms of life. They are intrinsic to the continuous task of monitoring,

managing, and modulating our capacities that is life's work of what Rose terms "the contemporary biological citizen" (ibid.).

### **Differences Not a Deficit**

*Wrong Planet*, an online community for individuals with autism founded in 2004, has today gained more than 80,000 registered members since its creation. Alex Plank, its founder, said, "On Wrong Planet, many with autism who can't literally vocalize speech but can write get to 'speak' though their written Internet posts" (cited in Quart 2013: 64). Ian Hacking notes the public fascination with autistic narratives, and the role of the Internet in enabling autistic people to interact with others while avoiding the difficulties of face-to-face interaction. He points out that these autistic texts — novels, autobiographies, blogs — have been creating a language in which to talk about autistic experience that was hitherto unknown (Hacking 2009b, 2009c). I will return to this observation of "language-creation" after a pause looking at the site name: *Wrong Planet*.

"Wrong Planet" is used as a metaphor for the strangeness of autistic people. Aliens from outer space, exiled to Earth, forced to share a planet with the inhabitants of Earth. Autism picked up the trope of the alien about twenty years ago. The trope has persisted in some autism communities: either that autistic people are aliens, or that non-autistic people seem like aliens to autists. Aliens can be better than us. Friend or foe, aliens are definitely not us. Hacking, a philosopher of science, thinks that contraries illumine what they are not, and suggests that we can learn about X by reflecting on what makes something not-X. What does the metaphor of the alien show about humanity? What is it about autistic people that prompts the trope of the alien? How are autists different from other human beings? (Hacking 2009a: 45)

Hacking invokes examples from Wolfgang Köhler's *Gestalt Psychology*, a book from which Wittgenstein devoted some of his classes reading. Köhler's observation that "not only the so-called expressive movements but also the practical behavior of human being is a good picture of their inner life" anticipated Wittgenstein's aphorism that "the human body is the best picture of the human soul." Köhler pointed to a wide range of phenomena in which we *see* and do not infer what a person is doing. For example, a child reaching out to touch an animal, but not daring to do so. We see what the child wants to do and also see that that's a bit too scary. That kind of understanding, Köhler

designates as “*the common property and practice of mankind*” (cited in Hacking 2009b: 1471). That kind of intuitive “seeings” of other mind, Hacking calls *Köhler’s phenomena*, and pointed out that they are familiar to most people, but are precisely what are not familiar, ‘automatic’, ‘immediate’ or ‘instinctive’ for most autistic people. They are not ‘the common property and practice’ of that part of mankind that is autistic. Moreover, the autistic and the non-autistic, neither can readily *see* what the other is doing (2009b: 1471).

I think contemporary autism has the potential to become a testing critique of many easy assertions of a “shared humanity,” a challenge to the purity and the rigor of an indivisible boundary that discrete a generic humanity. With respect to “us human”, there is also *Lacan’s phenomena*, that only human is capable of the pretending pretense, because pretense presupposes taking the other into account, while an animal is characterized by an incapacity to *pretend to pretend*. But we know that many people with autism have no idea of pretending and are fixatedly truthful; then how do we place them? Likewise, there is *Heidegger’s phenomena*, that animal is poor in world [*weltarm*] and man is world forming [*weltbildend*].<sup>1</sup> In what way does autistic people have world? Are they too world-forming? How deprived is their world?

Giorgio Agamben talks about “anthropological machine”, by which he meant: the production of man through the opposition man/animal, human/inhuman. The machine necessarily functions by means of an exclusion and an inclusion, by excluding as not (yet) human an already human being from itself, by isolating the nonhuman within the human. He refers to the idea of *Homo alalus*, or the ape-man (Agamben 2004:37). *Homo alalus* was a conjectured primitive speechless man, supposed to have made his appearance during the Pliocene Epoch, in what is usually called the human form, but destitute of the power of framing and using speech, as well as of the capacities accompanying that faculty. This fictitious ape-man is only a shadow cast by language. Ernst Haeckel, who believed that either man has language or he simply is not, invented the idea of a prelinguistic ape-man (*sprachloser Urmensch*), as the missing link in the passage from primates to humans. Pliocene Epoch was not Papua New Guinea, where, however remote and with strange customs, visitors and natives are talking and making creoles in no time. Pliocene Epoch was more like another planet, and ape-man more like unintelligible *aliens*.

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1 See the superb deconstructive reading in Derrida (2008) *The Animal That Therefore I Am*.



However, the question of how we ever know what is going on in the mind of another person cannot be reduced to the question of ‘human language.’ Wittgenstein mused, “If a lion could talk, we could not understand him” (Wittgenstein 1958: 223). If a Martian spoke, could we understand it? The complex situations of autistic and non-autistic people failing to understand each other may involve plotting, thinking, feeling and different sensory experience. While in Theory of Mind approaches to autism, relying on “false belief tests”, the problems in understanding other minds are one-sidedly attributed to the cognitive dysfunction of the autistic. Here I think Thomas Nagel’s 1974 philosophy essay of “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?” remains pertinent as a critique of reductionist theories of the mind. Nagel chose bats for a reason. They are warm blooded mammals, more closely related to us than pigeons or whales. Nevertheless, bats present a range of activity and a sensory apparatus so different from ours. “Anyone who has spent some time in an enclosed space with an excited bat knows what it is to encounter a fundamentally alien form of life,” Nagel writes (1979:168). Bat sonar, though clearly a form of perception, is not similar in operation to any sense that we possess, and there is no reason to suppose that there is subjectively like anything we can experience or imagine. In so far as I can contemplate it, the range of our imagination is very limited. To the fact that we cannot expect ever to accommodate in our language a detailed description of Martian or bat experience should not lead us to dismiss as meaningless the claim that bat and Martians have experiences fully comparable in richness of detail to our own. But an understanding may be permanently denied to us by the limits of our nature. Reflection on what it is like to be a bat seems to lead us to the conclusion that there are humanly inaccessible facts. We can be compelled to recognize the existence of such facts without being able to state or comprehend them (Nagel 1979: 170).

What professionals see as “autistic” usually is what they can see, not what the autistic persons experience. Abnormal behaviors in autism, however, are just like the tip of the iceberg; the underlying causes may involve problems of communication, social understanding, different imagination, and the underlying perceptual problems affected by alternate sensory experiences. A higher degree of sensory sensitivity may cause autistic children to acquire defensive strategies to protect themselves from overload. On a planet where inhabitants are dominantly “neurotypicals”, their unusual responses to sensory stimuli might cause “abnormal” perceptions, which might give

rise to high levels of anxiety, which in turn would result in obsessive and compulsive behaviors, and social and communication difficulties. As Donna Williams wrote, her problem in infancy was not so much that she did not understand the world, but that she could not stand it, because she was so often bombarded with an overload of sensory information (1996:1). As Temple Grandin argues, so many professionals have ignored sensory issues because some people just can't imagine that an alternate sensory reality exists if they have not experienced it personally (2008: 58).

### Language Creation beyond Diagnosis

Amanda Bagg's eight minutes video *In My Language*, posted on YouTube in 2007, provokes a wide range of viewers to feel and to think. As Erin Manning reads, "she speaks, but she also rocks, smells, touches, tastes, observes, feeling with the environment... suggests that there is something about the event-ness of Bagg's responsive environment that we'll never know, because to know it is to feel it" (2009: 214). Words cannot fully express experience's complexity. Rather, language moves with the sensual exploration of the interactive environment. This sensory becoming, bringing potential relations into actual experience, as Baggs maintains, is "a way of thinking in its own right". She says, "But my language is not about designing words or even visual symbols for people to interpret. It is about being in a constant conversation with every aspect of my environment, reacting physically to all parts of my surroundings." Thought is more than a form-taking of words. It is a proposition for feeling in motion, a force that drives at the interactive edge of becoming-events. Yet despite Baggs' invitation to participate in the complex interplay, words cannot fully convey the affective tonality of the milieu that co-constitutes her. And this opaqueness, as Manning notes, "leaves us with a sense of hunger for what cannot be expressed" (2009: 220). The lived experiences of those with autism may still be too far afield, and the possibility of "role switching" and true empathy remains in doubt.

The autistic and the non-autistic, neither can readily understand what the other is doing, thinking, feeling. Yet this seeming symmetry is only partial, as Hacking points out. We the non-autistic have been crafting languages for the emotions of (non-autistic) others and ourselves for thousands years; it may have taken many generations of our ancient ancestors to enrich them. And only late in prehistory would these languages have been internalized.

Besides, what is now called first-person authority over awareness of our own emotional states would have come into being slowly. But there has been no language for expressing the lives of autistic people until recently (Hacking 2009a: 55). Only in our lifetime, precisely the recent thirty years, we are beginning to see the adaptation of that ordinary language to the autistic life. Autistic autobiographies, novels, and the immensely rich world of autism lived on the Internet have been creating a language in which to talk about autistic experience.

Hacking is not exaggerating when he emphasizes the connection between contemporary autism and the Internet. The Internet is radically changing human communication and the ways in which human beings interrelate. We the non-autistic relate primarily face-to-face, seeing what each other is doing from look in the eye and the bodily gesture. That ability is a precondition for the formation of language about the neurotypical human thoughts and human sociality. The difficulties of communication experienced by many autistic people derived from such prior social impairments. Now, in the Internet era, when we are communicating to each other, we text, we email; no longer do I look at you, make eye contact, or notice bodily signals. On the one hand, the Internet makes neurotypicals behave much more like autistic people than could have been imagined even a decade ago, on the other hand, autistic people are now able to communicate, just like neurotypicals, on keyboard and screen (Hacking 2010: 653). The Internet turns out to be a vital part of the niche construction of many autistic adults.

Parallel the time when Google incorporated as an emblem of the Internet, a politics of neurological diversity emerged in the late 1990s. There is an international web-based movement often referred to as “Neurodiversity,” which is promoted primarily by the autistic self-advocate community. Susanne Antonetta celebrates this jubilant concurrence:

How amazing, how twenty-first-century, perhaps: the fact that we have each other, that we can talk to groups of people like ourselves who come together, often in cyberspace, the fact that we exist at all in these ways and these numbers, when one hundred years ago we might have been in the type of perpetual confinement called the “rest cure” or, a few hundred years before that, treated with whips. (Antonetta 2005: 5-6)

And it is under likewise condition that Amanda Baggs could declare a powerful manifesto in a video posted on YouTube: *In My Language*, which has been watched by millions:

The thinking of people like me is only taken seriously if we learn your language...It is only when I type something in your language that you refer to me as having communication...I find it very interesting that failure to learn your language is seen as a deficit but failure to learn my language is seen so natural. (Baggs 2007)

The neurodiversity questions about normality itself: whether there really is, or should be, a normal way for all of us to express emotion, process sensory experience, and interact with others. They are trying to wrest autism out of a professional context in which those differences are too often medicalized and pathologized, with labels of deficit, dysfunction, or disorder. The fact that these communities, their agenda and narratives are thriving has contested many diagnostic criteria, such as persistent deficits in social communication, restricted interests or activities (DSM-5: 50). Advocates of autistic integrity, such as Amanda Baggs, warn against the policy of cure and prevention, as well as the idea of *defeating autism*: “working toward cure and prevention is hurting a lot of people, and a lot is at stake.” It is the taking of “steps toward the genetic elimination of autistic people— people like me— from the planet” (Baggs 2010).

I would not go further to propagate the views of current advocates, which is not the purpose of this paper. I am aware that there are children with autism who are incapable of speaking for themselves, even with keyboard and screen, and that some parents see the pro-rights activists as being arrogant in asserting their assumptions. Regarding the label of autism, controversies abound, and consensus remains lacking. This paper tries to look at the complex history of its movement from the early 1940 to the present, not to ascertain a definitive truth condition of autism, but rather to use the human difference and potential of autism as a critical frontier to question the taken for granted assumptions about shared humanity, normality, sociality, communication and understanding.

The issue addressed in Derrida’s essay “Signature Event Context” remains relevant to our concerns. Though J.L. Austin recognizes the possibility of failure or “infelicity” as unavoidable risk in communication, he regards them as accidental and inessential to the process of communication. Whereas Derrida proposes to take the possibility of failure seriously, as a positive contingency of communication, as a risk that reveals something radical about the nature of communication and linguistic community (Derrida 1988). The diagnosis of deficit, dysfunction, and disorder seems an easily accepted

containment of those “infelicitous” situation in communication; and the according treatments are often based on, and consolidating via appealing to, the dubious assumptions of a normal or “shared” humanity. This paper proposes to loosen up those dogmatic assumptions, and benefit from the open up potentials of human difference.

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