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Enter the Ghost, exit the Ghost, re-enter the Ghost: The Red Specter ¹

Une sorte d'obscurité hallucinante me fait lentement perdre la tête, me
communiquer une torsion de tout l'être tendu vers l'impossible. Georges
Bataille, *Le coupable*.

Enter the Ghost

I

In November of 2008 the United States Department of Defense launched the *Joint Operating Environment* (JOE), a study that “intended to serve as a starting point for discussions about the future security environment at the operational level of war.”¹ Within the section entitled “Weak and Failing States”, in the chapter “The Contextual World”, it states:

In terms of worst-case scenarios for the Joint Force and indeed the world, two large and important states bear consideration for a rapid and sudden collapse: Pakistan and Mexico.

(...) The Mexican possibility may seem less likely, but the government, its politicians, police, and judicial infrastructure are all under sustained assault and pressure by criminal gangs and drug cartels. How that internal conflict turns out over the next several years will have a major

¹ the JOE | The Joint Operating Environment 2008, https://us.jfcom.mil/sites/J5/j59/default.aspx/_p.ii (sic)

impact on the stability of the Mexican state. Any descent by the (*sic*) Mexico into chaos would demand an American response based on the serious implications for homeland security alone.²

The previous declaration represents a betrayal of the secret that we had kept unspoken for years, a secret that we agreed, along with our neighbors, to keep quiet and to forget. Now that secret has been disclosed and we must accept that Mexico is indeed a failed state.

Nevertheless, the JOE is wrong to assume that the solution to our failure can be solved by the imposition, through a military intervention, of a state based on the rule of law. Such failure goes beyond legal order, as it is the condition of a temporal fracture. Any attempt to normalize such dislocated-time-structure, formulated as a promise of progress, will always become a failure.

This is perhaps, what has constituted us Mexicans for more than five hundred years: a history of impositions over cancellations that pile on top of each other creating a phantasmagoria of ruins within the identity of a nation that only exists as a projection of a civilizatory dream. The fracture brought about by the foreclosure of our history results in a collective psychosis from which we have cancelled some events as we expel it from our symbolic territory. Thus, our present is constituted not only by hysteria and neurosis as symptoms of such shocks, but also by a psychosis in which denied-time is manifested as a hallucination... It should not be surprising, then, that what returns is the materialization of a catastrophe...

Exit the Ghost

II

² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

The Mexican state is collapsing, if it hasn't already. However, forces of power, instead of standing their ground at the fracture of this collapsed time, are calling for their ghosts, as iconic forces of the past, to articulate the genealogical vindication that justifies the monopoly of violence:

the commemoration consist in create a community simulacra based in the conjuration of past violence, given that domination has been built, maybe with more effectiveness than in any other regime in the north or in the south, in the distortion of the victims reclaim to convert them in dominant ideology.³

2010 will be the year of the bicentenary, and the nation is preparing for the party:

Some are summoned from the national jubilee to make sure that the celebrated death will remain still –identified and buried– so the official ceremony works as the end of a long-awaited mourning. Mexican modern state is founded in the historical instrumentalization and sterilization of the victims and defatted; so, now days, the actual government is pasteurizing the ghosts to inscribe them into a national project whose final objective is to destroy the post-revolutionary machinery of legitimization and to replace it with a new system of identity vindication based on the liberal authoritarian myth.

Others have bestowed themselves with divine sovereignty, as a way to deal with the fall of the father incarnated in the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). After seventy years of a single party dictatorship, the fall of PRI produced a shredding in the continuity of history, creating not only a vacuum of power but also the absence of sovereignty. That void has been occupied by violence as divine justice. Mexico's drug war is the transgression of economic logics causing that the sovereign right over life to be the production of death as a sacred;⁴ sacrificial fees that re-call old Aztec rites installing again the ghosts of a transfigured Huchilobos.

³ Cuauhtémoc Medina. "Fantasmas Pasteurizados", *des-bordes*, 0)))resonancias(((desde los limites del arte y la política. January 2009. http://www.des-bordes.net/des-bordes/Cuauhtemoc_Medina01.php

⁴ "Cults demand a bloody squander of men and of victims of *sacrifice*. In its etymological meaning, *sacrifice* is nothing but the production of *sacred* things." Georges Bataille. *La conjuración sagrada*, Adriana Hidalgo editora, Argentina, 2008, p. 115.

And those few insurgents, haunted by the state and at the risk of being destroyed by the new sovereignty fury, are also calling upon the ghosts of past and betrayed struggles – recently graffiti showing the image of Zapata with the slogan “*Nos vemos en el 2010*” (“See you in 2010”) have appeared in some streets of Mexico City— conjured as a spell to invoke a time of redemption to-come: revolutionary times that melt in the holocaust as a promise for the possibility of fairer times.

It soon will be 2010: the cyclic use of violence and the pasteurization of ghosts becomes the spectacle of a country that can't handle its own present. However, as we stare at this ritual in astonishment we should ponder if, within this scenario, something is emerging or if we are only waiting for a subjugator to set it right. A father to rise up again to take care of all of this mess. Concealing, one more time, the fracture in which we stand. But, is there any possibility that the ghost won't be an iconic force to neutralize history? Can the apparition of the ghost could it be, exceeding all logic of representation, an irruption of a spectral time as fissure to exceed the boundaries of the possible?

Re-enter the Ghost

III

Undeniably, time is out of joint, messy and senseless.⁵ Yet, the moment for eruption, announced by the coincidence in dates (the bicentennial of independence of Spain and the centenary of Mexican

⁵ This reading on temporality is based in the ontology of the ghost proposed by French philosopher Jacques Derrida in his book *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning & the New International*. With this re-elaboration of the ghost of Marxism he stated an opposition to the construction of time, based in progress, established by capitalism and liberal democracies. He re-open time to deal with the fact that: “For it must be cried out, at a time when some have the audacity to neo-evangelise in the name of the ideal of a liberal democracy that has finally realised itself as the ideal of human history: never have violence, inequality, exclusion, famine, and thus economic oppression affected as many human beings in the history of the earth and of humanity. Instead of singing the advent of the ideal of liberal democracy and of the capitalist market in the euphoria of the end of history, instead of celebrating the ‘end of ideologies’ and the end of the great emancipatory discourses, let us never neglect this obvious macroscopic fact, made up of innumerable singular sites of suffering: no degree of progress allows one to ignore that never before, in absolute figures, have so many men, women and children been subjugated, starved or exterminated on the earth.” *Specters of Marx, the state of the debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International*, translated by Peggy Kamuf, Routledge 1994. In this paper we are not dealing with any ontology argument but rather re-think past within the Mexican archive.

Revolution), goes beyond the calling of every 100 years to renew a national state by means of a bloody purification legitimized in the victims of past violence. Because, maybe, this dislocation is the manifestation of the specter that opens the fracture to reveal the symptom of this time as a pictogram of sorrow in which life and death interweave to breed an amorphous fragment: the world in ruins that has left the scenario of modernity.

If we locate the ghost within the instrumental rationality the only experience that we will have will be the utilization of the past to create narratives to stabilize events in the form of a Myth in an ended History. Iconic forms to control past, to size it hold in the limits of rational experience. But, on the contrary, if we receive the specter as a fissure on this instrumentality and we locate it as an excess in the rational system of representation we could be provoked by an experience that, as the conjuration of the sacred, disintegrate the limits of experience as modernity constructed. Total excess, because the specter is the apparition of a disappearance, the present of the un-present: the pure contradiction that fractures conditions of time as historical *continnum*. Is the hallucination that conjures an experience of the “otherness.”

This hallucination is the phenomenon or anti-phenomenon where reality disintegrates to make a story that has not been named to surface: a history that has been expelled from the loop of time and that comes back with the same violence with which it was driven out. For that reason, the specter cannot be controlled nor can it be inscribed within a closed homogeneous time, but rather, as Derrida has already explained, its anachrony dictates the law:

To be just: beyond the living present in general—and beyond its simply negative reversal. A spectral moment, a moment that not longer belongs to time, if one understands by this word the linking of modalized presents (past present, actual present: “now,” future present). We are questioning in this instant, we are asking ourselves about this instant that is not docile to time, at least to what we call time. Furtive and untimely, the apparition of the specter does not belong to that time, it does not give time, not that one: “Enter the ghost, exit the ghost, re-enter

the ghost" (Hamlet).⁶

In the riot zone, in the fracture of a messy and senseless time, we ask ourselves: Whom will we see in 2010?

Enter the Ghost. Exit the Ghost. Re-enter the Ghost: the Red Specter

(http://www.des-bordes.net/des-bordes/mariana_botey01.php)

El Espectro Rojo: Crítica de la Razón Sacrificial is the art piece in which Mexican artist Mariana Botey elaborates a scheme of the sacrificial reason, a reworking of the proposal by the Mexican historian Alfredo López Austin about the relationship between myth and history in *Hombre-Dios*. In this new scheme Botey proposes a theoretical frame to re-think coloniality as a temporal cancellation that keeps hunting because is an event that has been expelled from our symbolic universe, a foreclosure, from which we have built, as a myth, history. A scheme of a theoretical enterprise that re-unites, in a sacred conjuration, the thinking of Bataille, Benjamin and Derrida, to invoke anything but the impossible; to call spectrality as an irruption of pure expenditure where the production of modernity collapses and creates the emergence of a revolutionary experience.

This work of art is the theoretical device for revolution: theory to re-think modernity from the dislocation of Mexican archive. Researching this specter, in its dissection and its schematization, Mariana Botey carries out a cartography of the geo-aesthetics of failure.

⁶ Derrida, Jacques. 1994. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International*. Translated by P. Kamuf. New York and London: Routledge. p.xx

But, the execution of this theoretical frame manifested it self as pure expenditure in the form of art, is the creation of an uncanny experience that put in to question the logics of representation. The formality of the scheme, that pushes the conceptual artistic tradition to a radical impenetrability, crumbles with the image of the Red Specter, the formlessness allegory in which the critique of the sacrificial reason is enunciated.

The surfacing of three spectral figures that resembles an out of time avenging force emerges as the impossibility for a symbolic reference to fix this specter. Uncanny pictures of something that frights that make us uncomfortable because in it strangeness is a revelation of something private and concealed. The Red Specter appears and we know that is the mark of the return of the repressed: the indian, the rebel, the barricade, the Black Death, the plague, the virus, the contagious, the control, the police, the conquest, the concealed. It is the uncanny open up the invisible archive of our fracture. It is the fear and the rejoice that dislocate the rational experience to set us free in the pure expenditure of death. It is the manifestation of a riot zone where two different logics come across and collapse: the rational and the sacrificial.

The Red Specter is the dialectical image, the allegorical fragment that appears so the uncanny side of modernity can emerge. This time out of joint, that manifested it self as a fracture, is the symptom that permits us to break with the dominant system of representation that homogenize the event in a correspondence with history as lineal and continuous progress. The Red Specter is the fragment of the baroque machinery in which Botey enunciates her scheme of the *Crítica de la Razón Sacrificial* (*Critique of Sacrificial Reason*) in order to establish a critique of the conditions of possibility for a reason that excesses all instrumental logic.

The sacrificial, as George Bataille proposed, presents it self as a surplus reason that creates a fissure in the hegemonic system, a malfunction that breaks all homogeneity. And the critique as Botey's proposes goes beyond the mere theoretical reverie, as it is the archaeology needed to unveil the immanent conditions of an experience that operates within the economy of transgression, an

archeology from which we can locate the concealed in which the spectral experience of our coloniality its inscribed:

the ghost that call into us is clearly dismembered, even so it maintains a certain resemblance with its original body. Such resemblance is of a structural and logical order. An historical resemblance but only in its mythical correlation and organized it psychosis by the original act of foreclosure: that is, the “cultural other” is in this case the rejection of a fundamental signifier expelled from the symbolic universe of modernity. The ghost has a couple of names but we are not going to mention them, someone might get scared since it would invoke “the uncanny”.⁷

Here, however, we are going to name the sinister, because we want to place ourselves in the disjunction raised by the demand of the specter. We shall not produce a ghost as a neutralization of the past. Instead we shall call it by its name to re-open time and tell another story: “the postcolony as exchange (commerce) of secret alterities who negotiated and experiment around the project of autonomies in flux.”⁸

The *Crítica de la Razón Sacrificial* is an allegory working on the failure of modernity, a schema located in “the spectral interiority of the historic-political formation of capitalism as a system world”⁹ to assert a logic that exceeds the ways of control imposed by modernism-capitalism, the sacrificial reason.

In this sense, *El Espectro Rojo: Crítica de la Razón Sacrificial* is a theoretical contribution to produce the political frame to re-think the aesthetics (as conditions of possibility) of post-colonial experience but, as a work of art, it is also an aesthetical (as mobilization of the sensible) intervention that disturbs the regime of art. *El Espectro Rojo* incarnates in the work of art as a production that aims to operate and unhinge politics of representation, not in an inversion of values, but from the pollution of the invisible and of the unspeakable, of that which just by appearing is already disappearing.

⁷Mariana Botey, “Crítica de la Razón Sacrificial” en *des-bordes*, 0)))resonancias(((desde los límites del arte y la política. January 2009, http://www.des-bordes.net/des-bordes/mariana_botey01.php

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

El Espectro Rojo: Crítica de la Razón Sacrificial is not produced as a moment of representation but as the production of a historical device that re-makes history to invoke a political moment, to call it, to summon it. The piece is, thus, here and from the place of its execution, an art intervention that makes politics without compromising itself to the inner logic and structure of institutional critique. Nor does it pretend to be the dialectic production between an outside and an inside so art can be one of the instruments of the toolbox for revolution. Rather, it is an underground operation, almost invisible, from which plastic form elaborates the symptom of a disturbance in such a way that it could appear as if nothing is modified if it weren't because its operation reveals to us the deep need of a mutation.

Here the revolutionary conjuration makes history takes supremacy over politics because only from this temporary de-articulation can a moment of fracture of the modern conditions of experience emerge. A moment for the derangement of the construction of history as progress, in order to have access to the ruin, that neither reverts to the representation policies operating in the institutional critique nor it makes the art a production that affirms its political character in effectiveness. Neither symbol nor effect, but pure opacity that, in the form of an allegory, makes of language an assembly of fragments that re-define the poetic irruption as a way to make politics: politics of the excess, politics of the fissure, politics of the riot zone.

El Espectro Rojo: Crítica de la Razón Sacrificial is a work that, in itself is spectralized. Not only does it enunciate the conditions of possibility of reason structured in sacrifice but it is also inscribed within the same conditions and it also sacrifices itself: it offers itself as a gift that relinquishes any reciprocation, the absolute excess of production as pure expenditure. A production that produces nothing but invisible resonances, that works secretly not to invoke revolution but to provoke it.

Whom shall we see in 2010?

Enter the Ghost, exit the Ghost, re-enter the Ghost: The Red Specter.

A distinction will be needed between the instrumentalization of the past with the pasteurization of ghosts for creating a causal link between Myth and History and the haunting of the specter as the

emergence of an unsolved past that irrupts as a manifestation of the aporetic experience of this riot zone, that is today Mexico.

With this summoning we want to break through the limits of all systems of representation to devise history in a minor key: the history of sacrificial reason as a fissure in capitalism's logic that is no longer negotiable. The specter is named: Coloniality. Time has opened up.

We conjured together the ghost not to neutralize it but to let the specter be an irruption that allows us to make of this disjunction experience, not a moment of alienation, but a moment of excess as an activation force.