ANIMISM, VITALISM AND MACHINISM AS A WAY TO REARTICULATE THE NEED TO CONFRONT THE UNKNOWN IN A CONTRADICTORY MANNER

In power games, [apparatuses could be considered] relationship strategies supporting types of knowledge supported by themselves. – Michel Foucault, *Dits et Ecrits, tome III*, 1994, p. 299

We are immersed in a period that is vibrating, but ultimately lacking momentum. Since the 1960s, time’s arrow has lacked a definite course. Unsure which way to go, it has vacillated between the moral conservatism of the baby boomers and the forward thrust of Gucci-style consumption.

Leaving behind its Galilean scrutinising of the future, an exploration of inaccessible worlds that only Science (fiction) from the heights of its certitude could drive, Science (fiction) has slipped into the meanders of our digital society. The false footsteps of Bibendum (the Michelin tyre man) in the dirty dust of the moon that day in July 1969 marked an end to our entropic flights of fancy. The books of Neal Stephenson, William Gibson, Bruce Sterling and others, while marketed as speculative fiction, were in fact live broadcasts; the funhouse mirror that the genre tended to create, between the space of the imagination and the space of our daily lives, expanded throughout a universe of plausibilities. It melted into the news, in all its social dimensions.

Against the ‘rationalist wigs’ and the works of Hegelian spirit, we must open up to a world where even fears become fable, as lovely as they are carnal. We have to negotiate with the fold of the instant, the invagination of the thought of the future, and live in a present that’s like an asymptotic tend in time, between back to the future and tomorrow now, between dream time and the day after.
Under these paradoxical conditions, where the notion and perception of time are crushed on the surface of immanence, how can we believe that architecture can only be constituted by fossilised avatars, blind cadavers, expuls of naive and positivist values, as well as ‘quotational opportunism’ disguised as global entertainment? To reclaim the scenarios and substances that condition architecture and reveal the contradictions and fantasies that drive our societies, we need, on the contrary, to draw on this vibrating, disquieting and voluptuous temporality. Architecture is not something to be thought or produced for later, like the standard bearer for a morality. It can only be negotiated live, in its contingency on a situation and its solubility in a set of givens.

This critical and territorialised attitude is in sharp contrast to macro-cynical flights of fancy (the market creates the form!) and their remake sharp contrast to macro-cynical flights of fancy situation and its solubility in a set of givens. Our tools for the codification and re-scripting16 of existence, here and now. By necessity, it confronts its emergence, its Gestalt, and can only be negotiated in a mutant and tangible biotope, constituted by fossilised avatars, blind cadavers, and Deleuze were a point of fusion and arborescence to attain a plateau,13 a terravincipinta, to break out of the grip of those who declared that they had discursive, pedagogic and linear authority. That made it possible for us to escape from Pinocchian dreams, millenarian apostles and cynical moralists, and walk gaily over the many and multiple contradictions and fantasies that drive our societies, we need, on the contrary, to draw on this vibrating, disquieting and voluptuous temporality. Architecture is not something to be thought or produced for later, like the standard bearer for a morality. It can only be negotiated live, in its contingency on a situation and its solubility in a set of givens.

Notes
1. Michel Foucault, Dits et Ecrits, tome II, Gallimard (Paris), 1994, p 299
2. Stanley Kubrick wrote the script for A Clockwork Orange (1971) during the filming of the last scenes of 2001: A Space Odyssey in order to simultaneously visit Hélène’s last Galilean projection and its broken-mirror opposite, a sort of morning-after following an excess of hyperionist, positivist narratives. Contemporary history has proved the accuracy of his schizophrenia. Ever since that two-fold production, we have been caught in this stopped time, with no past and no future, a vibrating and unendable, enjoying Heavenly Bodies Beach of Earthly Delights, between heaven and hell. This re-dating of the Big Bang, ‘the day the universe stood still’, to 1987, introduces Postmodernism and Deconstruction as pure medical artifacts, collateral consequences of that vibration.
3. Over the course of time all systems become progressively disordered as they approach their final state of total equilibrium (the second law of thermodynamics). In order to track our environment, physical sciences born out of the study of turbulence, vibration, disequilibrium and probability have taken the place of the linear sciences where things are viewed as following a quantitative and determinist path.
4. One percent of the 3,000 polar bears (Ursus maritimus) in Svalbard are hermaphrodites, with a vagina and a penis. The conditions for survival at the North Pole, including Soviet nuclear waste materials carried by the Arctic Stream and the carbon effluence of the Gulf Stream, have allowed us to observe the first natural mutation. 5. See Bruce Sterling, Tomorrow Now, Random House (New York), 2003.
6. How can we reconcile the need to save the Amazonian rainforest and at the same time our fascination with the bulldozer (a sort of caterpillar with beetle pincers)
the visible spectrum: that is its political and operational condition. It generates processes of transformation that take the risk of critical positions and mutations, on the razor’s edge. There can be no pleasure in announcing the ‘infocalypse’. We can only harvest its often strange fruits.

The bluey mess between what they are supposed to do, as perfect alienated and domesticated creatures, and the anthropomorphic psychology we intentionally project on them, creates a spectrum of potentiality, both interpellative and productive, which is able to re-‘scenarise’ the operating processes of the architectural field. Machines are a vector of narration, generators of rumour, and at the same time directly operational, with an accurate efficiency of production. These multiple disorders, this kind of schizophrenia, could be considered a tool for re-opening processes and subjectivities, for re-‘prototaxing’ indeterminacy and uncertainties. In this way, machines become agents of blur logic, of a reactive and reprogrammable logic.18 As in Alice in Wonderland, where Lewis Carroll used mathematics to confuse a little girl’s perception, such apparatuses, including ‘bachelor machines’, stretch a line of ‘subjectifications’ to organise ‘repetitions and anomalies’, by developing paradigms that are able to re-complexify and de-alienate the edges of the truth system, in order to reinvent the logic of meaning and turn it into a vanishing point.

It seems to make strategic sense to evaluate architecture’s degree of reality on the basis of its ability to tell stories and in this way enlarge the dimension of its physicality. In a sense, we should consider the structure itself as a fragment of a scenario, as a MacGuffin: the point where and from which speeches, strategies, scientific protocols and power games articulate stories and agendas. Misunderstandings, in this sense, produce artefacts — in ‘the garden which licks the thread’19 — and apparatuses can be considered as generators of ambiguities and knowledge, where non-shaping emergent protocols contingently reveal the conditions that is cutting it down? This dual attitude protects us from ecological alks, pretend dreams of purity and of the villain, as well as from becoming enslaved to the machineries of the tabula rasa as become agents of blur logic, of a reactive and reprogrammable logic.

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11. Consider how Jules Verne completed Edgar Alan Poe’s The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket (1838). Poe’s last, enigmatic phrase leaves the reader perplexed and frustrated: ‘But there arose in our pathway a monstrous human figure, far larger in proportions than any dweller among men. And the hue of the skin was the perfect whiteness of the snow.’ In Jules Verne’s sequel, Le Sphinx des Glaces (The Sphinx of the Ice Fields), he wrote: ‘Yet! These were physical facts, not imaginary phenomena … This monstrous shape (the shrouded figure) was nothing but a colossal magnet …’ This massive shape (the shrouded figure) was nothing but a colossal magnet … whose power produced effects as natural as they were terrible.21

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of emerision and are revealed by them, as in a Situationist strategy. The ‘machinism’ presented here should be considered a preliminary spectrum from a speculative self-organised urbanism (freethoughtabout) to a digestive physiological experiment (therapeuticrobotics). Within these endpoints are a stochastic machine with a predictable uncompletion (Olivero), an industrial milling machine for ‘anthropomorphic transactions (waterflux), a hydromonic bacteriological Hitchcockian ‘Broomwitch’, and, last but not least, a pure machine with a predictable uncompletion (Olivero), an industrial milling machine for ‘anthropomorphic transactions (waterflux), a hydromonic bacteriological Hitchcockian ‘Broomwitch’, and, last but not least, a pure machine with a predictable uncompletion (Olivero), an industrial milling machine for ‘anthropomorphic transactions (waterflux), a hydromonic bacteriological Hitchcockian ‘Broomwitch’, and, last but not least, a pure machine with a predictable uncompletion (Olivero), an industrial milling machine for ‘anthropomorphic transactions (waterflux), a hydromonic bacteriological Hitchcockian ‘Broomwitch’, and, last but not least, a pure machine with a predictable uncompletion (Olivero), an industrial milling machine for 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