

Enjoying COVID19? Movement, home and body.

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A few weeks before the World Health Organization declared the global pandemic of COVID19 on March 12, 2020, daily life had begun to be disrupted by a sinister cloud advancing forcefully from Asia to Europe, to the Americas and to the rest of the world. Freud conceived the *ominous* as a complex phenomenon of diverse characteristics such as: an affect that transmutes into anguish through the return of the repressed (SE, 17, 241), which is intimately related to death, corpses and the return of the dead (241); the conscious awareness of involuntary repetition (238) that reproduces castration anxiety; (233) and, most importantly for this crisis, the opacity between fantasy and reality (244) caused by the autonomic development of an animated entity. The ominous today manifest in our fear of death and contagion, in the increasing repetition of global deaths and in the deep disturbances of human life caused by the Coronavirus, which lacking metabolism because it does not feed or excrete, seeks only to hack cells to reproduce *ad infinitum*.

Possibly the strangest historical time for most people, this ominous experience might generate the feeling of being out of reality, in a sci-fi movie. This crisis is a universal event (notion I worked in *So, You Want a Master?* 2020) that is to say, the Coronavirus is something that negatively affects us all -potential death from contracting the disease- and requires abolishment. We know, however, that the pandemic, as an effect of the capitalist system -brutally inequitable, individualistic, ecologically devastating, and with debilitated scientific and health institutions-, affects some more than others. The traumatic residue of the pandemic -that which is left without signification or symbolic inscription - is partially veiled in our return to individualism and nationalism.

The COVID19 virus, as *object a*, a spectrality invisible to the naked eye, impacts us in ways that we do not yet know or fully understand, and its consequences are still undetermined. Being an irruption of the Real, always traumatic, the Coronavirus event has fully bent our symbolic apparatus, and forces us to face this new form of the Real. Ignited by the traumatic nature of this event, we have contracted the contagious fever to communicate and say all about it, which injects artistic and cultural production with overwhelming symbolic and imaginary proliferations aiming to signify a process of the Real on the loose.

But beyond the dreadful affect caused by the threat of possible contagion and the reality of mass mortality, the pandemic awakens us: life can exist radically different and thus the world is in the making. Perhaps as a propaedeutic training, given the impending doom of climate change, this Real *qua* nature gives an opportunity to the Capitalocene -the human subjected to the environmentally devastating system, a term proposed by Jason W. Moore (2017). With this crisis we are given the possibility of responding to our collective symptom: the proletariat, that is, COVID19 proposes the possibility of grasping this contingency to respond with an organization that addresses the radical inequity of our time.

The possibilities of getting infected and potentially suffering death, the precariousness of social life, and the uncertainty of health and economic future are fecund conditions for the emergence of fear, anguish, suffering and enjoyment. Enjoyment, or *jouissance* in the Lacanian sense, is a universal human quality that embodies excessive psychical tension, and produces effects that go from pleasure, to anguish, to *jouissance* (a morbid or self-destructive enjoyment that is signified by an internalized Other), to surplus *jouissance* (the occurrence of an excess, linked to social discourse, that paradoxically produces a lack that does not satisfy). The pandemic is enjoyed: we suffer it as much as it is delightful. Among the myriad experiences that cause the enjoyment of this pandemic, three seem central: the *bodies* in their dimension of community; the *movement*, which is linked to desire and the space of *home*, which questions politics.

Bodies: Community

COVID19 shows us the inevitable entwinement we have with others. Lacan called this *extimacy* (S7, 139) the topology of psychical connection of inside and outside, as in the Moebius strip or Klein bottle, between one human and others. We ought to retreat from regular spaces and habitual practices in order to ‘flatten the curve’ of contagion: to be able to take care of our self, we need to take care of others. This new order shows the intimate connection between human beings, not only socially but, in this case, statistically and biologically. This condition of otherness is paradoxical and brings a great discontent, agitated in a double way: on the one hand, isolation in quarantine requires the estrangement of others for security reasons, nullifying the haptic and rendering others ominous for their potential of contagion (even eye contact is disappearing in the street, as if the gaze was extending the contagion) which impacts, among other important issues, the realization of love and solidarity among those who do not live together during the pandemic. On the other hand, physical contact, now limited to those with whom we share a life, affects the usual discharges of psychical tension - libido and destrudo- and turns it exclusively towards one's body and those of the family, which causes a major upset in the very regulation of *jouissance*, demanding renegotiation of the structural mechanisms of alienation and separation.

On the other hand, with the pandemic injunction limiting social contact, our cyborg condition has increased. In a recent text, *Will a cyborg steal my jouissance?* (2019), I claimed that there is a subjective co-production with technological devices mass-produced (laptop, cell phone, social networks), which Lacan calls *lathouse* (S17, p. 63). This cyborg condition has resulted in a disembodiment of the body of others, privileging the link with digital objects rather than among humans, consequently benefiting digital capital and weakening social bonding. The question to be determined is whether this pandemic will in fact put the digital object (Zoom?) at the service of social bonding, of more humane relations, rather than serving capitalism.

Movement: Desire

Everyday dynamism, the rush imposed by urban life, was forcefully decelerated by COVID19 and many have consequently found pleasurable opportunities to stop and think, relax and reinvent time, space, the self and community. The analyst observes in clinical practice some unprecedented statements, audacity to repositioning in life, a heightened sense of being purposely

alive under these dire circumstances, whose stakes have opened opportunities of solidarity, recognition and action. This pause of the quotidian contrasts with the frenetic activity in the media and social media, and that rush is for some a true thrill that soothes a sense of emptiness or welcomes a generalized chaos that normalizes their own.

Proliferating symbolic and imaginary loudness, however, have caused many other people to feel disoriented or drained of energy to think and create; The spatiotemporal flexibility achieved gives rise to an emerging opacity of the Other's structural site, which now has blurred. The Other with capital O, the internalized entity that monitors and creates meaning of who we are, doesn't know in the pandemic either. Even if the Other does not actually exist, its place is a structural necessity to activate the movement towards desire; in the pandemic the diffused place of the Other can lead to procrastination, avoidance or paralysis, at the individual scale, or to community and political apathy in the collective. Without knowing how to resolve the movement towards desire, the subject is lost in impotence or superegoic persecution. What transference mechanisms - the subject supposed to know - can catalyze the movement towards emancipatory desire, individually and socially, during the pandemic?

Home: Politics.

Home and individual private ownership return as the privileged site of safety during the COVID19 crisis. The psychic-spatial relations, in the absence of usual socialization, require negotiations that always call for the exercise of power. Spatiotemporal redistribution at home can be an opportunity to rediscover intimacy among household members: revisiting "doing together" practices, etc.

The spatial redistribution can be an opportunity to discover anew intimacy among the household members: revisiting practices of "doing together", etc. But being confined at home can also bring increasing tensions that lead to domestic violence or to emotional regression. People who live alone might enjoy having time to pursue activities they haven't been able to do before, but some experience the strangest feeling of not being touched by anyone for few weeks now.

Home as a renewed refuge extends to the nation and contrasts dramatically with the economic reality that looms ahead and that will affect us all, even more seriously those most vulnerable among us: the homeless, the refugees, the immigrants who lack a home and who constitute that collective symptom that we can't inscribed. The question that remains undetermined is whether the residues of this trauma will be, even partially, rendered legible and if we can take hold of the possibilities for political action that are opened to us.

Hilda Fernandez-Alvarez

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