

The life of ghosts: melancholy and memory

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Abstract

This essay aims to amplify the conceptions of the ghost, either as a political-narrative figuration, or as a dynamism, in an experimental and intuitive way. In order to do so, it travels through some itineraries: first, it discusses a ghostly logic originating from the fields of philosophy, social sciences, literature and analytical psychology; then, it briefly investigates resonances of this logic based on Fisher's concepts on reversing the melancholy of lost futures through the work of opening to ghosts; and ends with a reflection on the uses of memory as resistance from the mythological figures of Saturn, Mnemosyne and the metaphors of Ogawa's *The Memory Police*. ■



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Ghosts: an introduction of imaging

Ghosts, spirits, specters, hauntings, lost souls. There are many images of spectrality that, from folklore, seem to proliferate and deepen in us a feeling of terror provoked by the displacement of a supposedly natural state of things.

Among the immaterial companions of human life on earth, we can establish ghosts as one of the most persistent. We were never not surrounded by ghosts: they were in the ancient chants of Greco-Roman, Mesopotamian and Celtic lyric poetry; they were worshiped as numinous forces — divine or demonic; they often spread through the myths told around a campfire or a hearth, wearing images worthy of the most terrifying fairy tales. They have inspired all sorts of artistic expressions over the centuries, such as works by Homer, William Shakespeare, Emily Brontë, as well as the so-called “phantasmagoria”, a *fin de siècle* aesthetic movement that gave rise, for example, to cinema. They are on the altars of memory — historical monuments, places of religious worship and cemeteries — and they are found particularly in the most traumatic spaces. They seem to get attached to dark humans and inhabit human shadows, choosing, in old photographs, the valuable space behind the loved one. The ability of ghosts to haunt stands out in relation to other types of horror because they inevitably evoke a feeling of strange proximity, since they rarely appear in a scene to which they do not belong. Ghosts never leave our dreams, their privileged instance of communication.

Ghosts share a status of wonder with monsters: they come from a millennial perspective that uses the ambiguity of archetypal images to celebrate the fantastic of reality. However, unlike monsters, beings native to the imaginal antipodes of the globe, ghosts live in the cracks of the familiar, as diaphanous guardians of the borders

of things. They are symbols of the porosity and movement of at least three traditional divisions of the experience of memory: the death-life, the past-future and the material-immaterial. In times of barbarism and genocide, the ghost becomes one of the most poignant images on which analytical psychology can focus, inside and outside the clinic, especially regarding the crossing of the melancholy of futures already lost.

This essay aims to amplify the conceptions of the ghost, either as a political-narrative figuration, or as a dynamism, within the fields of philosophy, social sciences, literature, and analytical psychology. The essay style was chosen because, as a textual experiment, it is desired to invite a reading committed to the field of the sensitive and the power of images in conceptual production. Thus, we seek to connect information from different fields of knowledge through the basting of imagination — this thread so characteristic of the intuitive style that it cannot avoid inviting the very ghosts of its authorship to participate in its production.

Last but not least, it is dedicated to the memory of all those who, in recent years, have departed, but have not left us at all.

Ghostly logics I: rehearsing conceptions

To think about a life for ghosts may seem a contradiction to the extent that they are beings devoid of organic life, antithetical to matter or endowed with another quality of manifestation. Despite the apparent confusion, in more than one context, they give rise to the impression that they have not completely abandoned the ills of human life, their social ties, their attachments or their affections. Something persistent seems to define them in terms of expression, as well as the images and meanings that outline them as symbols. Instead of resolving the contradic-

tion between living and no longer existing, we chose to start from the Hillmanian inspiration of the *eidos* — an idea as a prism of what is seen and through which one sees, pregnant with potential meanings — in an exercise of tracking its ghostly traits (HILLMAN, 2010). Not the ghost as an object of study, but as a key figure for understanding its own dynamics, its diaphanous vitality as a logic that permeates the materiality of life, or even the ghost as a vital function of the psyche.

The first characteristic of ghosts is their intrinsic vital negativity, after all, they are not usually defined by having life. Derrida (1994) states that haunting does not suppose a traditional idea of presence as materiality. Instead, the philosopher understands hauntings, specters and ghosts as beings that reveal the presence of absence.

For Derrida, spectrality supports such a paradox because it departs from another temporal logic. The ghost is a possible image of time: an image of splitting and diffraction of time. Not the chronological time, organized and metrical in accordance with the developmental line of Christian-modern temporality, but *time out of joint*, which Shakespeare announces in the first stanzas of Hamlet to designate the state of disorder in the kingdom of Denmark, the emergency condition of the famous ghost in his play: Hamlet's father, who alerts him to his terrifying coup.

In addition to linear time, other images of time and their concrete agency in human life are known to exist. Jungian symbolic thinking needs the notion of coexistence, sometimes confluent, sometimes divergent, of different times and logics in the individual's vital process, in dialogic and in confrontation with the unconscious. Similarly, as far as Derrida is concerned, split temporalities accompany his philosophical trajectory. For his ontological perspective, the temporal contradiction of the spectrum is because it cannot be completely present — therefore, not being a being itself —, rather indicating a double relationship with what no longer is and with what has not yet come to be (DERRIDA, 1994).

It is in the interregnum between these two instances of the ghost, between what no longer is and what has not yet come to be, that we find two other characteristics: the compulsive tendency to repeat trauma in fatal patterns (the ghost as what no longer is); and the capacity of the ghost not to exist in fact, to exist as a virtuality or personification of the soul, attractor or anticipator of what may still happen (the ghost as what has not yet come to be). Although the commonplace of the ghost quickly relates it to the supernatural itself or to the supernatural as a figure of speech, Derrida's ontological investigation is careful not to literalize it into an obvious figure, choosing to approximate it to the spectral agency of the virtual, of what acts in the real without materially existing. Therein resides, therefore, the opening to the archetypal and philosophical potential of his image.

Ghostly logics start from the understanding of a spectral causality. It could be traced as an intuition earlier, at least, by Marx, Freud, and Warburg.

In Marx, the main author to which Derrida (1994) turns to build the pillars of his elaboration, the specter appears as the opening figure in his *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (“the specter of communism haunts Europe”), the first of countless other specters that populate the thought of the important political philosopher. The invisible government of financial abstractions, as well as current *big data*, is a clear example of this spectrality. Not only in the capitalist logic itself, but it also exists in the collective production of a totalitarian stratum of subjectivation, neoliberal and colonial, which defends itself from the need for spectrality through constant denials (exorcisms?) of Marxist ghosts, especially its most famous specter: communism. Moreover, in Freud, spectral causality meets, among other points, the conditions of commitment formations through which the so-called psychopathology of contemporary life occurs. Dreams, symptoms, jokes, and parapraxes as the particular haunting of the Freudian psychic apparatus. If repression deals with

the possibility of the return of its tense content under the diaphanous cloak of the primary process, then this mechanism may go by the name of ghost.

In Aby Warburg, in turn, the temporal complexity of the spectra is brought to the scope of art history. He, a German thinker unclassifiable to a single area, is himself a ghost not admitted to the house of official historiography. His seminal effort to review the formative patterns of narratives around the discontinuities of art over the centuries, postulating a new theory of the image that, according to the philosopher of art Didi-Huberman (2013), can be read through three segments: the phantom-image, the pathos-image, and the symptom-image. For Warburg, the spectrality of the image is complex: in opposition to the supposed linearity of a reading that follows positive coordinates, he erects the concept of image survival. He seeks to understand the image as a tangle of temporalities, anachronisms, contortions, and inclinations of human life that resist erasure. Like the proposal of archetypal psychology, his “ghost stories for grown-ups” make use of the pathos of the image, outlined in formulas of tragicity, to demonstrate a specific, hybrid temporality of conflicts that, despite being buried, do not find rest in the images at all.

Ghostly logics II: the Jungian field

Like Warburg, analytical psychology considers anachronisms in its understanding of the world. However, it is not common to find terms such as “ghost” or “spectrum” in the Jungian work. Despite Jung’s great interest in the paranormal, notable in his doctoral research on mediumistic phenomena, in the *Red Book* and in the *Seven Sermons to the Dead*, it is more frequent to find the terms “spirit” and “soul”, basic concepts that enjoy of deep philosophical status in Jungian epistemology.

The term “spirit” appears sometimes as the counterpart of physical human existence, as consecrated by Platonic and Christian doctrine, in an intricate rescue of phenomena and under-

standings over which the Enlightenment casts a shadow, sometimes as a political-cultural climate, a *zeitgeist*, which it approaches the movements of the collective unconscious, the archetypes and the idea of objective psyche. The term “soul”, in turn, designates both the relationship with the unconscious and a personification of unconscious contents (JUNG, 2013a, par. 463). In Jung, “soul” concerns both the relationship with the unconscious and the unity of the psychic processes through which the subject is gestated and individuated: one does not have a soul; rather, one is part of a soul. In none of the cases there is clearly reference to ghostly logic or spectral causality as such.

There is, however, a famous exception: chapter XI of *The Nature of the Psyche* (JUNG, 2013b) about the psychological belief in the existence of spirits. In it, the meaning attributed to the term “spirit” approaches the definition of ghost and gives clues about how Jung would understand the spectral agency on the subject. Jung emphasizes that spirits refer simultaneously to what is unknown and what is familiar in the experience of concrete life, the presumed presence of the invisible, of the beyond, in course in the erupt of intense feelings, such as fear. There is, in this Jungian elaboration, greater proximity to his conception of fantasy and, mainly, of an autonomous complex.

By complex, we understand a certain grouping of images and meanings associated with moments or experiences endowed with affective tone and relative degrees of autonomy. Organized around archetypal themes, it is known that the further away from the field of consciousness accessible to the ego complex, the darker its autonomy will be, and it may even manifest itself through a potentially violent compensation called constellation. Furthermore, in certain manifestations of this phenomenon, an autonomous complex, excessively charged with an energetic valence, assumes control instead of the ego complex, guiding the subject to actions often called “unconscious” that have already been

associated with the traditional idea of “possession” (JUNG, 2013b).

In the very etymological consideration of the terms, the concept of fantasy is closer to the reality of the phantom. “Phantom” and “fantasy” derive from the Greek term, *phantázein*, “to reveal”, which in turn derives from *pháínen*, “to show”. Both acquired the meaning of imaginary beings, not existing in reality. From French, a language consecrated as master by positivist science, *fantasme* means “fantasy”. Hence the term “phantasmatic”, in the so-called profound psychologies of the beginning of the last century, refers more to the logic of the imagination than to the meaning developed here as ghostly. The entry “fantasy”, in *Psychological Types*, states:

By fantasy I mean two distinct things: the phantom and imaginative activity. [...] By fantasy as a phantom I understand a complex of representations that is distinguished from other complexes of representations in that it does not correspond externally to a real situation. Although a fantasy may have its origin in memories of experiences that actually occurred, its content does not correspond to any external reality, but is essentially just the flow of the creative activity of the spirit, an activation or product of the combination of psychic elements, endowed with energy (JUNG, 2013a, para. 799).

Jung’s explanation follows the line that fantasy as imaginative activity derives from the direct expression of psychic dynamism itself, that the phenomenological nature of psychic energy takes the form of an image, or an immaterial content projected onto matter. Phantom, in this sense, acquires the broad meaning of everything that cannot manifest itself to consciousness except in the form of an image: the phantom as a force-idea (JUNG, 2013a).

Such was the proximity between this psychic dynamism and ghostly logic that Hollis (2017)

dedicated a book to relating the theme of invisible entities to the action of the autonomous complexes that direct our history. Although it prioritizes the clinical approach, it did not fail to richly exemplify how the same dynamism is present in culture and society through many artistic works. Although, contrary to the Jungian specificity, which attributes the astonishing particularly to the phenomenon of the psychic constellation, it is remarkable that Hollis (2017) confuses a ghostly logic with the logic of the very nature of fantasy and, in this way, essentializes the agency of the specters and dilutes the impact. historical and political representation of the spectral personification. After all, as much as this logic supports temporalities that are anachronistic to that of the historical structure, it is nonetheless urged and provoked to manifest itself in ways that can only be understood in the light of the very moment in which it haunts.

What we call ghostly logic does not intend to encompass all possibilities of imagination dynamism, but to refer to a particular form of psychic agency that deals specifically with symbolic contents associated with death in its broad sense. By bringing the ghosts closer to his idea of the underworld, a world of darkness, Hillman (2013) rescues other references to contextualize the Jungian framework. One of the paradigms of his approach is the dream: no longer understood as a diurnal rest or as a compensatory movement, the dream constitutes an initiation into another world order, a journey to the chthonic confines of the imagination, to the subterranean world of shadows, which must remain hidden, never desecrated by the light and air of conscious life, by interpretation and translation, Titanic and Apollonian tools, on pain of losing the archetypal quality of nocturnal imagination. The dream does not aim to complete the egoic consciousness, but to empty it, to receive it in the depths of the nocturnal world, as in the Eleusinian Mysteries.

Because dream images are imaginal beings at the service of death, Hillman (2013) invites us not to tear the veil of the beyond in search of a

meaning, but to take the ego, devoid of the expectation of healing itself through the conjuration, on a visit to their dead. As an opportunity to turn back, like Eurydice, hypnotized by the world of darkness and its specters, to what was left behind, Hillman's ideas suggest the adoption of a sympathetic posture in dealing with ghosts. After all, if the dream is a journey of the soul to the underworld, the haunting is a return of death to the day world of the conscious self in a way that reminds it of the limits of its titanism.

The ghost visits the living world and leaves traces of its haunting when harassed by human action that disregards its image ethos with the daytime world. In the Homeric imagination, the dead lacked *phrenes* and *thymos*. *Phrenes* refers to the respiratory awareness of the lung and voice and is related to the movement in and out of the body, the exchange with the environment; *thymos* is the blood vapor derived from the blood shed at sacrifices. They are shadows that wander without a body, without flesh, without bones, but endowed with a psyche, since the world of darkness is an entirely psychic world (HILLMAN, 2013).

They return to the daytime world, therefore, because the animic immaterial needs matter as much as matter needs animation. When they lack substantiation, they persist as haunting absences, demarcating tensions in the relationships between what lives and what dies, in relationships with pasts not fully elaborated, with images that insist on not dissolving in the light of day until one pays attention to its imperatives.

The melancholy of the lost futures

The lives of ghosts and the impact of ghostly logics matter today because they go far beyond the issues of psychology clinics. In addition to clarifying psychic dynamisms and symptomatic constructions, they constitute useful images for understanding the way in which some cultural complexes act on subjective and political entanglements of the present day: the gradual loss of symbolic thought in the constitution of the West,

the exhaustion of projects of Modernity, the neurotic cloister of the world's soul within the privatized psychopathology of the capitalist world and the disenchantment of inner life and its placeless shadows, among others examples.

However, it is possible that such tensions are finding a problematic cooling. To the extent that the success of totalitarian discourses, knowledge and practices enshrines our current drama, the balance of history is once again tilting towards the erasure of differences, shadows, complementarity of oppositions and cosmovisions that do not even owe to the dialectic of Western thought. Fisher (2014) diagnoses in these projects a more subtle one, which is that of an increasingly haunted world as it denies life to ghosts.

By insensitivity to the ghostly life, we refer to the contemporary circumstance, remarkable in the process of Eurocentric Westernization, in which not only is the world disenchanting with its marvelous dimension, but also a suffocating cloister is established for the possibilities of dealing with exteriority and imagining the upside down or out. More and more, dealing with the shadow is brutalized to the point of co-opting the radical egoic alterity in favor of increasingly docile or exotic versions of alterity.

On the other hand, the extinction is promised, via a denial sanctioned by the capitalist and colonial culture, of everything that can refer to the displeasure of the non-family. If, for Derrida (1994), what threatens the contemporary world is no longer the specter of communism, but the absence of it, we can understand, analogously from analytical psychology, that one of the most deleterious threats to the soul in the contemporary world is the growing resistance for creating responsibility for dark hues in consciousness, the neurotic apotheosis of a world devoid of the tragedy of time, of encounter and of the complex, which only fosters violent compensations.

The end of History, the cessation of the contradictions that move the world, is the main neoliberal fantasy of progress that looms large in our

scene and that penetrates the collective strata of subjectivity, depriving it of healthy contacts with the ghost. Often, one perceives a diffuse feeling of stasis that results, paradoxically, from the constant frenzy of novelty. A yearning for the established and the familiar, after times of destruction of security and solidarity, perpetrated by capitalism and the political catastrophe of the COVID-19 pandemic, is joined by a polar inertia, effect, and counterweight of the massive acceleration of communications and demands labor. This means that, behind the constant climate of novelties, there is an atrocious capture by a feeling of profound catatonia.

Decades ago, Hillman (2007) denounced hermetic intoxication as a characteristic of post-modernity, paying particular attention to the compensatory effects of its apocalyptic millenarian temporality: the megalomaniac illusion of the subject believing himself to be omnipresent in all spaces and times; the resulting paralysis of surrendering to the vertigo of perpetual motion. However, Hillman didn't live to witness the chronification of these movements nowadays in an immense autonomous cultural complex that, for many, is confused with the very perception of reality itself.

Fisher (2020) called capitalist realism the intense belief that there is no exteriority to the *status quo* and the subjective logic of consumption and domination, which accompanies the failure of the utopian imagination of changing the established state. Far from being an exclusive reference to the modes of economic production of societies, the author follows in the wake of considering it a mode of cultural and subjective production about a way of being alive that encompasses many different political realities, fully supported by other systems of oppression, such as patriarchy and coloniality.

Furthermore, the idea of *status quo* does not suggest the existence of a factual uniformity in terms of ideas, practices, images, or policies, but rather the fantasy of absence of alterity that appears in the contemporary scene when discuss-

ing the existence of other possibilities of living. When supported by a whole network of discourses, imaginaries, and practices, as in the case of capitalist realism, it neutralizes other worldviews and approaches the notion of titanism.

Conceptualized by López-Pedraza (2000), titanism is based on the Greco-Roman mythical reference of powerful beings from the immemorial past who fought against their Olympic succession. Psychologically, it deals with totalitarian and self-centered attitudes of subjects who, due to the inflation of hubris, lose contact with their mortal condition and start to devour everything that may offer an obstacle or tension to their fantasy of unique and undying existence. In this way, they promote death by denying it and, for that very reason, they receive it in the lightning bolt of Zeus.

In the vertigo of incessant movement, fantasies about the passage of time, when viewed through the lens of titanism, superficially lose their validity. Hence the greater ease in imagining the end of the world than the end of capitalism. The slow cancellation of the future serves this deleterious sense of reality, within which time is left out of joint, unquantifiable, and averse to presentification, only to manifest itself in a shadowy way. The constant movements of anachronism and retrospection of our culture, once intrinsic characteristics of the definition of postmodernity, now appear as hauntings of a prison devoid of the bars of the passage of time, in an eternal present.

According to Berardi (2011), the slow cancellation of the future concerns the gradual degradation, from the 1970s onwards, of an idea of the future gestated by the sociocultural narratives of modernity's progress:

[...] I am thinking of the psychological perception that emerged in the cultural situation of progressive modernity, of the cultural expectations that were manufactured during the long period of modern civilization and that reached their apogee

soon in the Second World War. These expectations were shaped in the conceptual framework of an ever progressive development, albeit through different methodologies: the mythology of the Hegelian-Marxist *Aufhebung* and the foundation of the new totality of communism; the bourgeois mythology of a linear development of well-being and democracy; the technocratic mythology of the universal power of scientific knowledge; and so on. My generation grew up at the height of this mythological temporalization, and it is very difficult, perhaps impossible, to let go of it and see reality without this kind of temporal lens (p. 13, author's translation).

It is not a matter of understanding such dynamics as a mere retreat, out of fear or misunderstanding, from the "old to the new", but of admitting the strength of the astonishment of persistent and ancient forms of the past in relation to the present. The cancellation of the future brought a deflation of expectations and the impossibility of elaborating a mourning of progress given the depletion of other perspectives of change in the political-cultural imaginary, bringing to the surface an enormity of ghosts unable to communicate their anxieties.

Traditionally, one of the psychological names for desymbolized grief is melancholy. For Fisher (2014), the non-linearity of time is revealed in it: through the persistence of the autonomous complex of the past in the present, the current state of melancholy of the ghosts of our life mimics the lost futures, the promised lost futures by the vanguards and countercultures of the last century and with futures absent due to the impossibility of prospecting celebrated by the terminal capitalism of neoliberalism. After all, political-cultural utopias, constituted from losses, need melancholic frames to manifest themselves.

If, according to Sontag (2007), depression is sadness devoid of the charms of the soul, we can relate the explosion of disabling psychic disor-

ders, such as mood disorders, to the impossibility of creating a symbolic relationship with the elaboration of futures that will not materialize. It is the hangover of the world, a failed reckoning no longer engaged in thinking about what will come after the future comes. Such is the success of neurotic and — also according to Fisher (2020) — capitalist one-sidedness: instead of the painful and slow withdrawal, through symbolization, of psychic energy from the reality of loss, the success of melancholy guarantees that the subject can express himself and live reality only within what has been lost.

For the work of mourning to begin, death must be conjured so that the dead do not return spectrally. The undeniable cannot be denied: a ghost never dies; it is always about to appear and reappear. The ritual of exorcism, of denial of the darkness, does not fit. The ghostly logics and spectral causalities are derived from failed mourning, the melancholy devoid of its charm. The spectrum does not allow us to accommodate ourselves to the mediocre satisfactions of a world ruled by titanism, in which neurosis constantly expands its reign.

Saturn and Mnemosyne: uses of memory

The ghost is native to the empire of melancholy. Of the possible ways to approach the melancholy of lost futures, the artistic expressions of the ghost seem to make use of melancholy itself to deepen it and turn it against itself. This was the conclusion of Hillman (2005), when reflecting, in his phenomenology of *senex* from Ficino and his Renaissance solution, on the elaboration of the depressive condition through the creative rescue of the melancholic condition as an opening to its dead.

The *senex* is a mythological motif that uses the archetypal meanings of stasis and conservation of current states to produce its images. And, when negative, it behaves similarly to the aforementioned titanism. Saturn, one of his best-known hypostases, particularly reigns over melancholy, paralysis, and the compulsion to re-

peat what is not resolved. It devours the novelty of otherness and imprisons it within itself, in its own logic. His time is never out of joint and, for that very reason, it gets confused and appalled with the ghostly nature of what it destroys in its vortex. Thus, appropriating art to think about how the aesthetic estrangement of the ghost can be a psychological reflection is, in the archetypal register, making Saturn purge his children.

The Saturnian melancholy arising from the fantasy of the cessation of the future has important implications for the field of memory. Constantly tensioned by narrative disputes in relation to the history of human collectives, the plane of memory is where life of ghosts finds its most exuberant expression because it is on memory that the imagination of time produces its personifications and distortions. Ghosts as quanta of traumatic memory prevented from elaboration that affect human life in the quality of its astonishing, but necessary, double: remembrance.

Made of image, word, energy and emotion, remembrance is, for Benjamin (1987), precisely the ultimate purpose of the act of narrating. The narrator is a reminder of what has already died. Image and word as symbols and acts that prevent the past from being lost amid oblivion, which, even so, has legitimacy in the archetypal plane of the experience of memory.

Like Penelope in her incessant work of weaving and undoing, the act of remembrance takes place through an incessant dynamism of remembrance and oblivion, an act linked to the other, like the river Lethe which, in the world of the dead, is also the other bank of the river Mnemosyne, at whose intersection lies the access to the realm of the dead. The goddess Mnemosyne herself is Kronos' sister, which suggests an archetypal kinship between the notions of time and reminiscence. Furthermore, she is the fifth wife of Zeus. From this union, Mnemosyne generates the forces of Song, the Muses, each of which represents a foundational art of civilization. As Mother of the Muses and godmother of poets, the goddess grants clairvoyance to those

who invoke her because, according to Hesiod, she is the one who sings of the past, the present and the future — all that was, all that is, all that will be —, demonstrating access to a temporal order distinct from the chronological-linear one. In the classical imagination, memory evokes the possibility of enunciating and reconstructing the past, as well as building itself towards the future: through what is remembered, we end up finding the thread that connects what precedes us to what follows us (GONÇALVES, 2017)

Just as the world at the end of history is the world at the end of the ghost, a world that imagines it can rewrite its past while maintaining an inert state of the eternal present is a world that has as a consequence the slow cancellation of the future. They are fantasies that need to coexist so that the present is narrated as a state impervious to changes, insularized and trembling due to its constant vertigo. In the current order of things, memory and oblivion acquire other valences because, more than ever, it is clear that they are crucial tools in the dispute for the maintenance of a master narrative of the world through which it is intended to subjugate and erase dissident lives that titanic systems do not. conceive as potential difference.

Ogawa's lesson: the resistance of memory

In the political dispute over official narratives, there is no doubt that insisting on remembrance is opting for political resistance to what must never be forgotten. Oblivion as an erasure that prevents narration and, therefore, the remembrance of other ways of existing is one of the main themes of *The Memory Police*, by Yoko Ogawa (2021), the last stop of this essay. Originally published in Japan in 1994, the novel was translated into Brazilian Portuguese and, in due course, released in 2021. Hypnotic and delicate, it begins with a description of a totalitarian dystopia and ends with an existential, surreal, and haunting meditation on our sense of reality. Here, both from an aesthetic

and a metaphorical point of view, elements from the book that can amplify the concepts worked on earlier are borrowed.

In the work, narrated in first person, inhabitants of an unnamed island, located in an unnamed country, under the reins of an oppressive regime, experience a collective and gradual form of amnesia: when they wake up, a living being or item, apparently random, begins to fade from their minds. Once the representation has faded, the inhabitants need to get rid of the beings or concrete items, consecrating total oblivion by erasing all evidence that they once existed in the world. The memory police, whose existence borders on omnipresence, is made of hunters whose ultimate, never-revealed purpose seems to be to destroy any possibility of resistance to the purge of objects and concrete beings.

Most people follow the pace of erasures in a compassionate way. However, a small portion is immune to the phenomenon of mass amnesia. Precisely for this reason, these people experience the curse of not forgetting what has ceased to exist, which gives these people a melancholy and lonely tone, constituting them as threats to the island's compulsory forgetting regime.

The protagonist, without name, family or friends, allies herself with an elderly ferryman, symbolically relegated to non-place when his contact with the outside world is extinguished via "forgetfulness" by the police, and her editor, R., who has the full ability to remember everything that has disappeared and, for that very reason, is also persecuted.

When R.'s death is decreed through his collective oblivion, the protagonist shelters him in a basement. Symbolically, it is in the underground space, through sneaky and silent interactions, that the three begin the clandestine activity of remembering everything that has gone: food, habits, objects, living beings. As the amnesia of the island's inhabitants continues, the world itself seems to disappear. With the cessation of the seasons, the island loses the passage of time and remains in an eternal winter, forgetting

the flowers, the inhabitants leaf roses on the riverbed and nothing more sprouts from the earth. In the memory cell, the protagonist remembers that her mother also had the ability not to forget. When going in search of her mother's clay sculptures, she discovers, inside them, forgotten objects: candies, music boxes, among others whose usefulness she can't even imagine. Objects that matter not because of their function or utility, but because they are precious ghosts of a world order that is less and less accessed by people. "Sneaky crystallizations" from memory, as the original Japanese title could be more literally translated.

The protagonist's subversion is also of narrative nature. As a typist and writer, her activity naturally raises the attribute of remembrance and creativity. The narrative of the book written by the protagonist is superimposed on the narrative of Ogawa, establishing a metafictional relationship with the very condition of struggle against oblivion. In the protagonist's story, a typist has her voice stolen and is imprisoned in a tower by her teacher. In the room where she is trapped are countless typewriters, each inhabited by a captured voice that will never see the light of day again. Allegory of the historical condition of silencing, the story prophesies the fate of the protagonist author, who eventually forgets how to write words — the final blow to her career and the beginning of her physical decline. Immediately afterwards, she forgets how to use her left leg, which then appears to her as a terrifying limb connected to her abdomen that dismays everyone on the island.

Until the moment in which amnesia takes over the narrator, mitigating her sense of identity and conscience, everything passes as the quietest, serene and eerie version of the apocalypse, in which the world ceases to exist because it ceases to matter. Although the attempts of resistance seem small, *The Memory Police* (2021) portrays a world whose radical insularization can only be fought by the delicate movement of expansion of images and words, as from the ob-

jects of the past found in clay sculptures. On this island devoid of the life of ghosts, the extinction of memory represents the concrete death of the living. Of the possibility of differing, of creating and of symbolizing.

This brings us to the end of the essay, which ends on the plane of paper, but wants to insist on the plane of memory. A memory that, archetypically, is necessarily close to dying in concreteness to be reborn as an image. The ghost as a vital function of the psyche starts from the image of the ghost as the avenger of oblivion, among many things, to try to safeguard an idea of life that does not exclude what dies from it, but that leaves death to persist in it. Let us not confuse the corpse with the dead, who in a ghostly way can still live. When this is forgotten, there is a shadowy return of what is left out of the illuminated stage of the memory of one-sided narratives, of individual, selective memory, of what should be recorded in the neurotic state, but not

in states that are larger in life. The extinction of the ghost is at the service of the ultimate negation: that of duplicity, porosity, movement, the imagery and the imaginal. A world not haunted by its opposites and its doubles is the apotheosis of functionality, literality, utilitarianism. In this sense, the end of the book is revealing: already forgotten by everyone, resistant to the ultimate amnesia of the self, with which the book ends, R. leaves the basement, says goodbye to the protagonist, absorbed in her last sigh, and sees the sunlight again. R.'s very existence is the ghost of the island's dystopian regime. If the future of the place was lost to oblivion, at least R., ghost of the island's totalitarian logic, forgotten, but not completely, survives to remember its history via its promise of narration: still the best and most urgent way to glorify the life of ghosts. ■

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Resumo

A vida dos fantasmas: melancolia e memória

Este ensaio visa amplificar as concepções de fantasma, seja como figuração político-narrativa, seja como dinamismo, de forma experimental e intuitiva. Para tanto, cumpre alguns itinerários: primeiramente, discorre a respeito de uma lógica fantasmal oriunda dos campos da filosofia, das ciências sociais, da literatura e da psicologia analítica; a seguir, investiga brevemente ressonâncias dessa lógica a partir de conceitos de Fisher sobre reverter a melancolia dos futuros perdidos pelo trabalho de abertura aos fantasmas; e finda com uma reflexão sobre os usos da memória enquanto resistência a partir das figuras mitológicas de Saturno, Mnemosyne e das metáforas da obra A polícia da memória, de Ogawa. ■

Palavras-chave: fantasmas, melancolia, memória, psicologia analítica.

Resumen

La vida de los fantasmas: melancolía y memoria

*Este ensayo pretende ampliar las concepciones del fantasma, sea como figuración político-narrativa o como dinamismo, de manera experimental e intuitiva. Para ello, cumple algunos itinerarios: en primer lugar, discute una lógica fantasmal proveniente de los campos de la filosofía, las ciencias sociales, la literatura y la psicología analítica; luego, indaga brevemente res-
onancias de esta lógica a partir de los conceptos de Fisher sobre revertir la melancolía de los futuros perdidos a través del trabajo de apertura a los fantasmas; y finaliza con una reflexión sobre los usos de la memoria como resistencia a partir de las figuras mitológicas de Saturno, Mnemosyne y las metáforas de La policía de la memoria de Ogawa. ■*

Palabras clave: fantasmas, melancolía, memoria, psicología analítica

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