

postshamanism | (1999)

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For Mick

2.

One of these nights I am going to sit at my wooden desk and I will recall that other night in which I met Liberato and Jacobo and some of the events that have happened since. And I will write down the words that you are reading at this instant.¹

It was late at night in Buenos Aires, in the midst of the winter, my father and I were walking through the dark streets in the centre of the city toward the building of the national Congress, where my mother, a lawyer who had been working for decades with indigenous political organisations, held the post of Secretary of Indigenous Affairs.

When we arrived in the large, dimly illuminated office, all of a sudden I entered into another period of my life. My mother was sitting on a chair, beside her desk. So was my younger brother. Some people were standing around them, walking slowly about the room, whispering distant words. Two *Indians*, dressed in ragged clothes, dark pants and dirty white shirts, were standing next to my mother and brother. They were leaning over toward them: they were blowing on their heads, gesturing with their hands, every once in a while whispering some words. Suddenly with the velocity of lightning they would suck their foreheads or necks, and utter a dry, dark, shout—aahhhhjijj!. They would do it several times. They were healing them.

4.

Jacobo Ortiz and Liberato Salvatierra, two Toba men from the province of Formosa. Angled faces, ancient gestures.² They are in their seventies, though they look strong. Now they are

healing me. AAAAAHHHJJJJ!! I am sitting on a wooden chair, sinking in to the night of Buenos Aires, facing the window toward the square in front of the Parliament. I have my eyes closed. I just met these men minutes ago. They want to heal you too, someone said. Yes, grandson, you too. And now one of them is blowing and at times spitting on my head. Then suddenly he sucks, until he sort of swallows something. It is located in his throat now. Bicho, he says, in a low voice: an insect. He shows the bicho to me, the insect, that is. It is a very small orange stone, covered with the shaman's saliva. Then he puts it back in his mouth. He swallows it. That is the disease. I am sick of an ancient ailment, an evil spirit. Then he extracts another small stone, another 'insect', as he says. In the same way, perhaps, as the alchemist philosophers and doctors of the Middle Ages tried to extract the stone of madness from people's brains. Bicho, he says again. Another stone, this time black and shaped differently, I can swear. The next time it will be a worm that he takes from inside my body, my neck or my head. The disease. The sorcery that someone has sent us, my family and me. He swallows them back, and slams his chest and belly. Good, tasty, he says. It makes him stronger, each time he eats the insect he gains more power, same as every time he defeats an enemy shaman. These are evil diseases, embodied in what they call 'insects', or 'stones', which they now show me: wet, supposedly just taken out of my body. I could see something warm, dark, moving. Evil spirits concretised. The devil is never lacking, so they said.

I am healed, all set for that night; same as my parents and brother. It is 1985 and I am fifteen years old.

23.

Toba Indians from Sombrero Negro—'black hat'—an area in the Province of Formosa, Northern Argentina. These same people and their shamans were the object of a marvelous ethnography by Alfred Metraux, 'an ethnographer's ethnographer' (as he was once called by Sidney Mintz),³ the classmate and friend of Georges Bataille,⁴ who introduced him to anthropology and to Mauss's teachings on taboo.⁵

I began reading Metraux's texts in Spanish translations at the library of the Argentinean Congress. Metraux, who was born in Lausanne, had spent his childhood in Argentina, before returning to Switzerland and Paris to study philosophy and ethnology under Marcel Mauss. At the Ecole des Chartres he met Bataille. Besides his studies of Haitian voodoo, Inca history, Easter Island magic, Patagonian sorcery and development programs in Peru, he wrote accounts of Toba shamanism, social structure, the problem of alcoholism and suicide among the Toba and evangelisation. His conversations with two *pyogonaks*—shamans—Pedro and Kedok, document the same type of shamanic healing that I had undergone in the Office of Indigenous Affairs at the National Congress that cold night.



Toba shamans: Nahedi (left) and Kumachichi (right) at the National Congress Building, Buenos Aires, 1984

33.

Postshamanism: the discourse of an ever expanding curved line, an always displacing border. A non-linear horizon that keeps retreating from our tired eyes. Western modernity has been ostensibly shaped against figures of its total alterity. Would not the shaman, as a subject that transgresses the crucial modern ideological distinction between science, art and politics, be one such (un)thinkable character? She represented an element of radical otherness, the farthest creature over the face of the earth. The shaman was the face of the earth, indeed; a painted visage that came to allegedly embody the whole of natural history. Located in Siberia, that underworld, covered with feathers, invoking his dead ancestors, while singing and smoking, or playing his drums in ecstasy, trespassing the boundaries between nature and culture, between the world of the alive and the darkly luminous realms of the dead and the spirits. Climbing up to the sky while descending to the subterranean place of fear and fire, the firm yet agitated body of the shaman was the space where modernity located its dread and its desire. She, her drums and her lonely time machine.⁶

'Shamanism', the savant knowledge on those foreign practices, could be considered as another name for the discourse of modernity, along with Cartesianism or Hegelianism. Since the early nineteenth century the shaman was the ever mobile shadowy figure of living death where the Enlightenment found its complete heterogeneity. A starfish, always alert on the outside, submerged in the deepest ocean that Reason can think of.⁷

97.

Their Toba names were Kumachichi and Nahedi. They had been christened—once again—with Spanish names by who knows whom, state bureaucrats or British evangelists. They were given national ID cards when they were already grownups, thus their birth dates. Kumachichi had been named Liberato Salvatierra, which means approximately, ‘Liberator, saver of the earth’.

46.

A few days after that, we left Jacobo and Liberato at the cheap hotel where they were lodged. Then we went back home and my father cooked some pasta. We were about to start eating when he thought that the sauce was spoiled, so we left everything on the table and went to a pizza place instead.

The next morning Liberato—by then we knew he was regarded as the most powerful shaman in the region where he lived—told us: last night I went to your place, I flew while dreaming. I stood on the balcony outside. I could see you guys. You did a very weird thing. You were sitting at the table. Felipe brought the food, and all of a sudden you stood up, got your coats on and left. I was there for an hour and then I left.

We could confirm later that there was no way that Liberato, who had spent the night at the dusty hotel near the bus station, could have known that we had done exactly that the night before.

50.

Liberato and Jacobo used to be warriors. But then, Jacobo told us, the missionaries came. Today they are high ministers of the Anglican Church in England. Jacobo had become a pastor and he would sing to us the chants from the Bible in Toba translation.⁸ He told us that before they used to smoke regularly, often get drunk, have many women and execute their enemies, cutting the heads of the Chorote warriors after some battle. Not anymore. The missionary had taught them. He also forbade the practices of *pyogonaks* and their exchanges with the world of *payaks*, devils. Liberato smiled in a strange way when Jacobo told those things. He always remained silent, the quietest man on earth. Sitting on a chair for hours. He could manage not sleeping at all. Though he seemed most of the time in an in-between state, half asleep. He was dreaming, flying somewhere else. He surely was still a warrior, under the mask of a subject adapted to the teachings of the missionaries. ‘Thus said the missionary, Alfred’, Jacobo would say. And he would describe the immense parties they held to celebrate the defeat of their enemies, when the women prepared corn beer. And they would dance and dance, completely drunk, and they would dance, and dance, and celebrate death. And they would drink until, slowly, little men from beneath the earth, started appearing, rising from an underworld, ‘same as humans, same as man, as us’. And they danced with the Toba,

moving their little arms, to the music. At the entrance of the village, the beheaded body of a Chulupi Indian, had been tied to some tree. Only once Jacobo mentioned to me the act of eating the enemy's flesh, contradicting the non-existent records on the matter.

63.

Cannibals.⁹ That is the figure that was vindicated by the cosmopolitan Brazilian avantgardes in Rio de Janeiro in the twenties. In similar fashion to what happened to Juan de Solis, the Spanish explorer who first arrived to the Rio de la Plata, the river that bathes the coast of what today is Buenos Aires, a Portuguese bishop was eaten by the Tupi Indians in the early 1600s in today's Brazil. In 1918, this event became the pivotal scene for the thought of a Latin American radicalised art that sought to express the dialectics of modernism on the periphery of the Western world. 'Tupi or not Tupi: that is the question.' That was the motto of the manifesto written by the Anthropofagists, the Brazilian avantgarde movement that dictated the imperative need for Latin American modernist culture to devour the bulk of the Western symbolic world and re-elaborate its residues.¹⁰

26.

There are no ethnographic or historical records of cannibalism among the indigenous peoples of the Gran Chaco, although in colonial times, the Spanish *cronistas* used to ascribe such practices to the *infieles* of this area. The modernity of capital brought new images. In the early 1920s, strange men appeared in the surroundings of the sugar cane factories where the Toba worked. These men were terrifying; tall, bearded, with big eyes, and were depicted as black or mulatto. They wore strange dirty, white skirts that barely covered their long legs. They did not eat cow's meat because, accordingly to the Toba, they preferred human flesh, for they were surely related to the diabolic dogs that haunted the area. These supposed cannibals were in fact the last of three hundred workers brought from India in 1922 by the company in an attempt to improve labour efficiency during harvests.

74.

The devil is never lacking. The devil is never lacking, they would repeat. By then (this was a few months later) they were already living with us.

Late at night, Liberato, sleeping on the couch, would dream and travel through the airways, across the dark night. He would go look after his family and his many wives in Formosa, near the small town of Ingeniero Juarez. Occasionally he would spot a rival shaman doing sorcery to him and he would engage in battle and shoot his 'invisible bullets', in a sort of spiritual struggle. Unlike that time when he encountered a tiger, while walking alone in the bush, during the time of the Chaco war, a struggle between Paraguay and Bolivia, fought near the northern Argentinean border. During the war, Liberato shot two Paraguayans in a

clearing in the bush. When the tiger appeared in front of him, a few days later, it was different. He was unarmed. He had to fight for his life with just his bare hands. He talked to the tiger, for pyogonaks speak reputedly the language of animals, and control the natural elements too. He survived that time.

The devil is never lacking, they used to say. Especially Jacobo, who actually was using the translation that English missionaries gave to the Toba word *payak*, which meant all sorts of spirits located beyond good and evil. The Diablo was a negotiated image in the dialectical mingling of translations, neocolonialism and religion. A Christian shadow violently emerging within a clearing in the indigenous forest of symbols.¹¹

We had to pray, for the devil is never lacking. There was an implicit disagreement between both of them, Liberato stuck to his Toba lore, while claiming that Jacobo was his assistant, studying shamanism under his direction, and despite the fact that Jacobo was in his eighties, he 'still needed two more years of training and practice'.

79.

Years later, Jacobo and Liberato had already come and gone between Buenos Aires and their distant Formosa several times, transporting gifts back and forth. Every morning at dawn, before going to school, I would fix them their breakfast: *mate* and toast. They would have it sitting on the couch where they slept, before heading off for various appointments. The shamans in the city. The magicians among the skyscrapers, visiting Ministers, praying in the Vice President's office, healing wealthy upper-class housewives and visiting often one of their favorite places in the city, the local zoo: 'the home of the iguanas'.

85.

At some point I sat down with them to write down their life stories, as well as accounts of dreams and images. Much later, a few months after the last time I saw them, I started studying anthropology in Buenos Aires. I wanted to do research on myth and religion. Half way through my studies I began thinking of what Liberato and Jacobo inspired in me.

1122.

One day at the Institute of Anthropology I found the transcription of a lecture. That account of some Gnostic knowledge called 'postmodern ethnography' was marvelous, although the professor had written a most harsh critique.¹² Suddenly many dispersed pieces of my fragmentary world came together: literature, anthropology, art, modernism and primitivism. Apparently, an Australian anthropologist based in the USA had studied shamans and devils in Colombia, writing ethnographies where he blended Artaud, surrealism, Carpentier, hallucinogenics, Latin American politics, cotton plantations, mines and slavery ... A space of a certain terror.¹³ If that were true, there was a world outside, somewhere, which I had to

investigate, a world that would give some clue as to what to do with the fact of having met in the old building of the Congress, an old ragged shaman who ended up being a friend, an instructor, a grandfather. The guy whom I accompanied to meetings with the Vice President of the Republic and with former officers of the Korean army, as well as with poor young guys living a hard life in run-down studios in Buenos Aires, dying of incurable diseases.

66.

Postshamanism should be a thought of the remainder.¹⁴

116.

Juan Larrea was a Spanish poet born in Bilbao, Basque Country, in 1895. When he arrived in Peru in the early thirties he described himself in an interview as ‘an adventurer of the spirit’. He lived in Paris in the 1920s, frequenting the surrealists. He introduced surrealism to Spain, influencing Lorca, Alberti and the most important poets of the brilliant ‘generation of 1927’. He switched tongues and wrote his poetry in French, seldom publishing, except in a few obscure journals.¹⁵ Although regarded by many as one of the greatest poets of his generation, he preferred not to appear in public. His best friends were the Peruvian poet Cesar Vallejo and the Eastern European sculptor Jacques Lipschitz. The latter was also with him during his exile in Mexico and New York, where Larrea coordinated the political and cultural activities of an important group of republican intellectuals exiled from Franco’s Spain. In 1936, he organised with Paul Rivet at the Musée de l’Homme an exhibition of the collection of invaluable pieces from precolonial Peru he had acquired with the remains of a personal inheritance. The Collection JL was later donated to the Spanish Republic right after the exhibition.¹⁶

888.

One night—actually, that same night—he wrote these final words at the end of his essay: Postshamanism should be a thought of the remainder.

83.

The only time Liberato sang during a healing session was at the place of a young guy who was ill of a deadly disease.

It was a small apartment in an upper-class neighborhood in Buenos Aires. People, acquaintances of acquaintances, would ask to see the shamans, to be healed by them, or to ask them about the future. It was done under the condition of payment and people were obliged to gather clothes, food, and other items for the chiefs and their communities.

Once it was the case of a senator’s wife. This session took place at a luxurious office in the Congress. That day her daughter was coming into town from her province, near Chile.

The woman asked Liberato to 'do the *Hola*'. He referred in such way to answering the phone saying 'Hello'. Liberato would hold a photograph of someone, blow on it and whisper on it. Then he would put it next to his ear: 'Ahaa, Ahaa'. Like a telephone conversation. He talked with the photograph of her husband. He said the girl was not coming to Buenos Aires. 'Impossible', said the mother, 'she is on her way here, on the plane'. Twenty minutes later, the phone rang and an assistant announced that due to some problems she would only fly later that night.

They claimed they used telepathy. Ideas travelling as communications through the airways. It is our telegram, they said. If you are in trouble, send us a telegram. We will come to your help.

It was like the construction of their own technology. When Liberato and Jacobo went back to their communities after their first trip to the capital, they flew in a small Army airplane, carrying goods and food for their people.

A year later, Liberato would tell me that at night he dreamed and travelled through the airwaves, curing and fighting against rival shamans. 'I have a huge airplane', he said, 'It is white, and on the side it has big green letters that say "LIBERATO"'.

I realise, while I remember this, how much I miss Liberato. I have heard many times in the past years rumours about him and Jacobo having died; but then again, photographs and stories that had them as protagonists kept turning up. But now that I know for certain that they are dead, I really miss Liberato.

Liberato's chant seemed to be sung by another being, by a voice coming from an underworld. The night he sang, he invoked the powerful presence of his grandfather, Zamatay, the one that gave him the power to heal. He sang a trembling and mellow chant to attract the spirit of the disease to him. It was almost erotic. He was enticing the evil spirit to get closer. To kill it. Eat it. Destroy it. So he sang.

95.

Memory is an unstoppable machine. I can't stop it. You can't stop it either. Can you? Running always ahead of yourself ... Where does it go, our memory? Sure, it has a life of its own. I realise it in this dark afternoon in New York City in which I am trying to remember the deeds, the months I spent with those shamans that came from the forest to the fake Europeanised neighborhoods of a Third World capital.¹⁷

But I cannot remember at all. Just a face, a word, a fingertip. A stranger spitting on my head, sucking my neck, showing me a small black stone that he holds with two wrinkled, tired, strong fingers.¹⁸ The finger of my Indian grandfather. Maps drawn through the lines of their fingerprints, describing distant horizons, engraved on my soul.

I remember. From day one, they told us to call them Grandpa. And we were their grandsons. They gave us Toba names that had belonged to their ancestors. So suddenly we had new Toba relatives. We were included in new networks of kinship, miles away from Buenos Aires.

Halfway through their second visit, they often wore expensive French suits and dark sunglasses that some wealthy man had given them as payment for the healing. They were thus dressed in their interviews with politicians in high ranks of government. They considered them their peers, since they were chiefs representing their communities come to talk to the chiefs of the Argentine nation.

Indian shamans dressed in second-hand Armani suits, sporting Ray Bans, running into my horrified neighbors in the elevators, taking cabs in downtown Buenos Aires after a healing session where they whispered prayers and wore colorful feathered crowns, heading to meet a Minister or a Senator.

I think I remember tonight, as in a dream, in New York. There are photographs too.

I was always struck by the fact that their main aim was to get money to build a school in their community. They wanted to be Argentines. They claimed that they needed a school, an Argentinean flag, and a bilingual Toba teacher to teach Argentinean history and the lore of the Toba people. There is a photograph from the mid 1980s depicting Liberato embracing the Vice President who had travelled to Formosa to inaugurate the small school made of mud and bricks.

I guess I remember that. Or someone, or perhaps something remembers in me.

3.3.

The creation of the savage. One has only to read the chronicles of Jean de Lery, who visited Brazil in 1578.¹⁹ His accounts of the Tupinamba are the staging of a dialectics: the economy of European writing against the excess of value of savage labor.²⁰

The illiterate subject cannot separate the objectuality of the word from its meaning: language is not a medium that connects distances. This *perspective* seems to foreshadow what centuries later would be Levi-Strauss's sad topicality.²¹ Lery is told by an old Indian that 'a long time ago, a Mair (French man) gave us a religious language that we did not want to believe. Later on, another one, as an accursed sign, brought us the sword, with which we have not stopped killing each other ever since'. Thus History started with the good savage. Montaigne relied on Lery's accounts when writing on cannibals himself.²²

Those writings engendered the worst slumbers of modern Reason. They were the dark nightmares of the Enlightenment; like the fetishes the Portuguese merchants found in West Africa. The mannerist philosopher Spinoza wrote about a nightmare he had once, about 'the image of a certain black and leprous Brazilian': 'an Ethiopian'. A disturbingly vivid vision of this man persisted after he woke up at dawn in his study, and he attempted to make it disappear by focusing his sight on his bookshelves. The image of 'the head returned vividly until it gradually vanished', as a *déjà vu* of the Enlightenment.

3.4.

The journeys between Geneva—Lery's hometown—and the Latin American jungles fed the modern fictions since then. Metraux had also lived in Geneva, and before visiting Easter Island, and before Haiti and its voodoo, he lived among the Toba in northern Argentina. This was some time after frequenting the avantgarde milieus in Buenos Aires and the journal *Sur* where Roger Caillois—co-founder with Bataille of the *College de Sociologie*—stranded in Buenos Aires during the war, discovered Borges for Europe. Metraux the anthropologist and his friend Borges were the protagonists of yet one more Latin American rendezvous of ethnographic and surrealist contours. They would undertake long walks in the older, southern districts of Buenos Aires, searching for the limits of the city, there where the immense pampas would begin. Metraux knew many a secret kept by the Argentine plains. He would tease the elite writers about the fact that he knew the country in a way they would never possible know. Did he discuss with Borges the Toba myths? I wonder ...

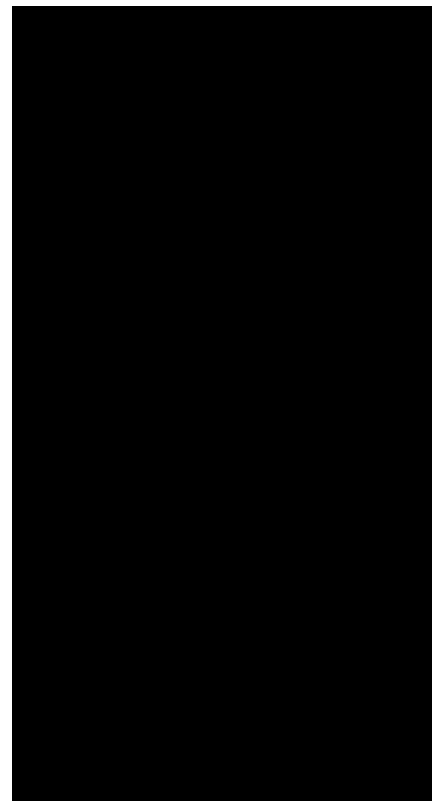
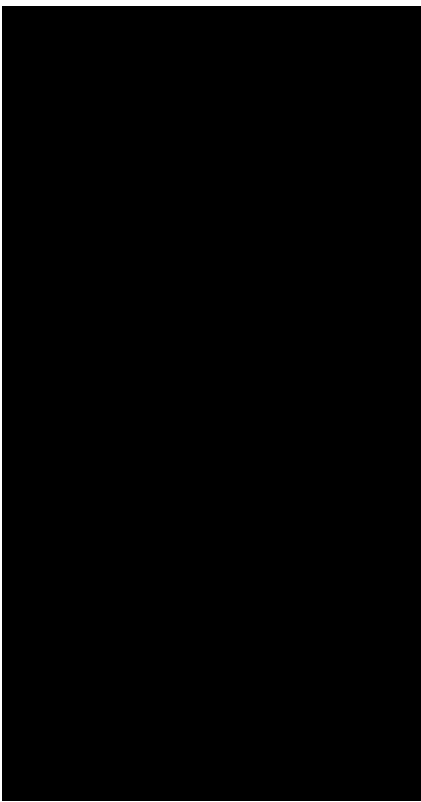
(And of course, Borges loved Switzerland, where he had spent his youth. He went to die in Geneva in 1986 and his mortal remains are buried there ...)

245.

Juan Larrea is a wonderful example of what scholars have called ethnographic surrealism.²³ He blended poetry, cultural theory, history of Latin America, studies in mysticism and religion, interpretations of archeological and anthropological issues. Books like *The Sword of the Dove* or *From Surrealism to Macchu Picchu* are investigations of the potential significance of Latin American and Spanish history, and the centrality of language for a negative dialectics between the abstract and the concrete, the sacred and the profane.²⁴

More than that, for me, when I was a child, he was always Grandpa Juan. In 1956 he moved to Argentina, after living for many years in New York. In 1967, my father became his sole disciple. In Paris, in 1927, he had metaphorically written in a poem—fifteen years before my Dad was born—that an unknown man named Felipe would become his heir after his death.²⁵

Larrea was a sacred, familiar presence in my home. He died when I was eleven. He influenced me secretly in many ways, since that telegram he sent to my parents congratulating them for my birth in 1969. I guess it was because of him that in an unconscious way, I always felt a veiled attraction for Columbia University. While living as an exile in New York in the 1940s, Larrea conducted most of his research at Columbia University Library. There, he developed his theories on the political and poetic origin of the text of the Book of Revelation. He wrote a history of Christianity in the light of the then just discovered Dead Sea Scrolls. He also elaborated essays on the poetics of history in Spain and Latin America, such as 'The Religion of Spanish Language', which he delivered in 1951 at Columbia's Casa Hispanica, on 116th Street.



Juan Larrea in his study in
Cordoba, Argentina,
c. mid-1970s

6.

In 1994, an old friend of mine, who was doing a PhD in Toronto, came to Buenos Aires, where texts published in the US were impossible to find. She brought me a book called *Perilous States*.²⁶ I was pleased to find out through the blurbs in the back cover, that the professor who wrote on shamans, surrealism and politics, had moved to Columbia University.

Around that time, my father, whom Juan Larrea had called his 'spiritual heir', continued working on manuscripts left by the Spanish poet. I assisted him in the publication of Larrea's critical edition of Cesar Vallejo's poems on the Spanish Civil war.²⁷

Larrea's archives were held for a few years in the small house we have in the northern province of Cordoba. Some time before that, the two Toba shamans spent a summer month with us in the house near the mountains and the river. They slept in the small library room that still held Larrea's belongings. The first morning Liberato told us 'I dreamed of the old man. He came to greet me. He was smiling, with a long white beard. He was very happy that his things were here with you'. We were astounded. There was no possibility at all that the shaman could have seen Larrea with a beard, which he only grew in the last two months of his life, in mid-1980.

1980.

The shaman is a black hole. The repository of anti-matter in our world. Our world, which is not this one.

345.

I would like to write about remainders. But then, what would I possibly say? There is nothing to say about the remainder. It remains. Silent. Immobile. Same as me. I remain, sometimes. I remain. Quiet.

756.

The two old shamans had a fascination for commodities. They loved them in all their might and colour. They would ask us to give them as presents most of what we had. Sunglasses, watches, shirts, pens, anything. For them, or for their relatives, who soon started writing to us long letters full of requests. They were our new relatives; the descendants of the men and women that were named as we were now named after them. My own new name, *Waynakachi*, gained me tens of cousins and uncles all over Formosa, descendants of the real *Waynakachi*, who had died years before. They were—and still they are—living in the most miserable of conditions. They would write to us and ask for tennis shoes, clothes, food, tools, shovels, material for construction, such as bricks.

A fascination with commodities. One of the first nights they discovered Coca Cola. After that they would never have lunch or dinner if we did not have Coke. My Indian grandfather would look at me, ‘*Waynakachi*, there is no Coke’ ... And it did not matter what time it was, I had to go and buy many big bottles of Coke for them, without which they would not have even a bite.

54.

I was named Juan after both Juan Amado, my mother’s father, and Juan Larrea, my step grandfather, who according to an Italian critic had been ‘the unknown father of Spanish surrealism’.²⁸

55.

That is my name, which is not myself. Where am I? Who remembers in me?

3.

The French style of the neo-baroque building of the National Congress, in Buenos Aires. One night in 1985, two years after the end of the military dictatorship. I guess it was around the time when the trial of the juntas was taking place. A Toba shaman was taking out small stones from my body. One by one. The evil spirits.

5763.

Borges is regarded as the great artisan of baroque metaphysical fables. Yet it could also be said that the fictiveness of all relations of power—and vice versa the performative power of fictive relationships—is the engine that propels his poetic endeavor. It is quite an uncanny experience to listen to him on tape, reciting his poem on the assassination of Narciso Laprida,

the man who in 1816 was the President of the Convention that declared Argentina's independence from Spain.

'The bullets buzz in the last evening. There is wind. And there are cinders in the wind ...'²⁹

Borges repeats the verses that he weft patiently in the dark. His monotonous voice whispers the poem about civil wars, scattered cinders and the eternal return of those political crimes that are the recurring kernel of the history 'of these cruel provinces'. The assassination of the man who proclaimed Argentina's freedom, killed in the midst of the desert, thus meeting finally 'his South American destiny'. Why do critics not regard Borges also as a crucial political philosopher? I wonder ...

879.55.

Their bodies—the remainders—materialised spirits. Their bodies incorporated objects. How did they swallow that matter and made it part of their soul? What kind of love is that love which can apprehend the bodily sensuousness of that idea congealed in a stone, in a coin, in a bee, in a cloud, in an idea? My body was in pain. So was my mind. I used to sleep for days and days on end, journeys without destiny, or destination. The fate of my body was merely to become the pain that my silky clothes suffered. One evening, in my ancient city, my body was touched by the body of the shaman. It was a sweet kind of violence. It was warm.

265.

The remainder remains. It is an incalculable residue. The sign of a perpetual loss. The remainder is loss itself. Ashes, excrements, ghosts, money. It is the remnant of the paternal inheritance and the ashes of the cigars that Dupin luxuriously enjoyed and that started the whole textual correspondences of the purloined letters.³⁰ I remember so many purloined letters in my own life. In my country. A missing person as a purloined letter. A dead body: the mortal remains. By means of some sort of obscure trickery, the remainder, which has been expelled from the system, is essential for the system to function. The remainder inhabits a frontier. A movable, constantly transgressed borderline. It is on the border, outside and inside of the system at the same time.

The necessary image of the impossible, the face of the remainder looks to the outside. The remainder remains being a ghostly presence. I would like to think that the shaman is that remainder.

59.

At the university in Buenos Aires, I had a teacher in a course on research methodology. We met once to have coffee and I discovered that, by coincidence, the young man had been doing fieldwork for years in the area where my Toba friends lived. He knew Liberato and Jacobo and some days later he brought me recent photographs of them. I had not seen them for

years. Now my friend is doing research at Yale, on the Toba historical experiences of exploitation and terror. I get a lot of insights from his brilliant ethnography. The issue of fictionalised, mythic cannibalism, the fetishism of commodities among the workers of the sugar cane refineries; the spirits of the bush.

He refers to the circulation of never-proved legends about Peron throwing banknotes from passing trains shortly after he became President. Myths of a magical welfare blended with the harshness of violence. In 1946, under Peron's Administration, six hundred Toba-Pilaga were massacred in Las Lomitas, Formosa.³¹

875.

Remains to be seen. Perhaps a *bicho*, an insignificant insect, can be a remainder. One day after school I was walking across the Avenida Nueve de Julio, the huge, wide avenue in front of my home. When I stopped by the street light, a bee came flying up. It approached me, flew around, I saw it. I saw it again. And again. I just moved forward a step so the bee would not sting me. When the light turned green, I walked to my place. When I came in, Liberato and Jacobo were there, preparing for lunch. Liberato came to me with the biggest smile I ever saw on him. Did you see the *lechiguana* that I sent you? I was perplexed. He could not have seen through the windows of my place, which look onto the avenue, that almost two blocks from there I was crossing and a bee was flying around my head. I did not pay attention to a bee in the center of the city because I had just come back from Cordoba, in the mountains, where bees abound and there is a bee hive right by my house. Liberato told me he had sent the bee in order to protect me.

A similar event took place a couple of years later, in Cordoba, when a little parrot came flying out of nowhere and landed on my brother's shoulder. The shaman, who was back in his province several hundreds of miles away and had not been informed of the episode, would later ask us about the bird (*kilik*), which my brother kept.

562.

The large windows of my parents' apartment, in Buenos Aires. All of a sudden, it was like a symphony. An orchestra of hundreds of glass instruments, all broken in pieces. Exploding all at once. I used to walk almost everyday by Arroyo Street, a very chic quasi-Parisian alley a few blocks long, ornamented with baroque mansions and modernist Chicago-style buildings from the 1940s. At the end of the street stood the Israeli Embassy.

In early 1992, I was in the kitchen and I heard an obscure noise and the earth started quivering. It was a booming sound in my ears that came from afar, like a wave. I had felt the wave approaching, in fact, a split second before the thunder. Then the whole building trembled, and I heard that symphony of broken glass.

The black, almost too black, column of smoke rising above the roofs was the sign of the effect of the bomb that had just exploded, blowing up the embassy. That, and the ashes. That, and the screams of the dozens of injured. That, and the prosaic absurdity, on a sunny day at noon, in that most elegant downtown street. And, of course, the immense hole located where the building of the embassy had been standing just seconds ago.

Many, many dead. Several clues and conspiracy theories that still today do not lead to a logical path ... That, and the shattered pieces of glass of my windows, scattered on the sidewalk, embedded in the skin of the strollers. That, and drops of blood on the pavement.

2873.

I spend my words like others spend money. I give them away. Period.

The marketplace of letters. A theatre of ideas, where we perform plays on the blank page. A potlatch, an ancient ceremony of gift-giving where someone's shame was the pride of the others. And power, certainly. Sensuous, white power. Season after season. Period. After period. The time of scribbling is a slow, clear, sequence of instants. For the ritual of writing resembles a bloody sacrifice—as Baudelaire said—and the dreadful rite of right writing. Composing a page, slowly. Just like in the ceremony of the circulation of precious objects. A moveable feast. My writing.³²

35.

Don DeLillo, masterful fabulist of Americana as the state of paranoia, usually writes facing the photograph of a writer who makes him think of someone that would never lose focus, or waste time. The photograph depicts Borges with a fierce, hyper-concentrated countenance. According to DeLillo he seems to have 'his mouth painted like a shaman'.³³

566.

Borges, who considered democracy to be 'an excess of statistics', and had supported both Pinochet and the Argentinean junta, later on speaking regretfully about the military and the dirty war undertaken by the terrorist state, affirmed: 'They ate the cannibals'.

Cinders in the wind. Where are the ashes of all the disappeared?³⁴

1994.

In mid 1994, two years after the bombing of the Israeli Embassy a sombre repetition took place. A Jewish cultural centre also located in downtown Buenos Aires was destroyed, blown away. Eighty-six people were dead and hundreds injured. Twelve years later, a new trial was taking place, a convoluted attempt to establish the facts, the staged deceptions and some of their internal and foreign connections of the potential perpetrators. That day in 1994, I was at a meeting not far from the place of the attack. I didn't hear anything, though.

1940.

Walter Benjamin met Caillois³⁵ at the almost secret sessions of the College de Sociologie in Paris in 1939 where he was scheduled to give a lecture on 'fashion'—a most unfashionable topic, according to Bataille who rejected it—that never took place. He had to flee Paris, leaving the enormous manuscript of the project on the Paris Arcades in Bataille's custody at the National Library.³⁶

In Buenos Aires in October 1939, Caillois published in the journal *Sur*, a text on the social context of the emergence of a certain political ideology. Some of its main adherents would arrive a few years later, in disguised identities to the same distant city that had sheltered him and other exiles.³⁷

In a letter Benjamin refers to 'a rather funny piece of work that just appeared in Argentina. It is a booklet published by Caillois that is an indictment of Nazism containing arguments gleaned from the world press [...]. It was not necessary to travel to the farthest regions of the intelligible and terrestrial world to write this booklet.'³⁸

Caillois's essay foreshadowed the emergence of remainders of that nature in the Argentinean capital. The human incarnation of the banality of evil, the face of the bureaucracy of terror in the first half of the twentieth century, Albert Eichmann was captured in May of 1960 by the Israeli secret services in Buenos Aires, where he had been living under a false name since 1950. He was allegedly identified by a blind man, a survivor of the Dachau camp.

328.

The work of Bataille and his College oscillated between forms of totalitarianism and freedom. The contiguity between fascism and democracy also generates a remainder: an 'empty place' at the core of power, necessary to sustain the rule of law.³⁹

In Buenos Aires, the main square symbolises such a space. The Plaza de Mayo of the Peronist masses, of the Mothers of the Disappeared and every other relevant political movement, which has periodically demonstrated by filling up that public square. In Easter of 1987 we, along with the two Toba shamans, watched on TV hundreds of thousands marching on the Plaza to prevent an attempted military coup d'etat, only three years after the end of the dictatorship.

244.

I don't remember. Hacer memoria. To make memory, to produce it. That is the phrasing in Spanish. A remainder is a reminder, like leftovers from the day before, which work their way into our dreams. Or those lovers left in past times, whom still haunt our thoughts.

But our consciousness is just a superficial part of the Unconscious. If consciousness is just the tip of the iceberg against which our titanic conceit crashes, then who speaks in me? And what sort of language does it speak?

Who produces the memory? Something recalls it. Where is my mind in this moment, I can only speculate ...

433.

Would those flights that Liberato took while dreaming/sleeping be some kind of unconscious displacement or condensation? How does the unconscious of a Toba shaman work?

1664.

Spinoza left his last text unfinished at the time of his death. The eleventh chapter of his essay 'On Democracy' is crowned by the words *reliqua desiderantur*, or, 'the remainder is lacking'.

14.

To make memory. Mnemotechnia. Some time ago, I started classifying my memories by numbers. As though they were frames in a film. A figure might emerge one of these days if one links the dots. But, as in Peter Greenaway's film 'Drowning by Numbers', some frames were lacking.

And I began recalling things that would happen much later. That same evening, or the following week ...

I think about that when wandering through the maze of alleys of my new city, discovering corners and shortcuts. Then, at some point, something shifts and Time suddenly becomes Space. I stop walking. In an untimely instant, my memories get imprinted on the cobblestones, and all over my body, in a strange calligraphy.

677.

'Shamanism' is an occidental ideology of control on a nomadic, vanishing, almost non-existent other. It is the discourse of the romantic culture of the first industrial revolution, of early capitalism, of the triumph of Reason. 'Shamanism' is a knowledge about the leftovers of the heterogeneous. It refers to an absolute alterity; an attempt to domesticate the unthinkable; to allegorise otherness and distance. A poignant presence that trespasses the boundaries of the world of the alive, talks to animals, fly with the eagles, stops the flux of time, heals the sick, gives political advice and invokes the dead ancestors. I guess that is not modern at all.

What would it be, in the aftermath of the dialectics of enlightenment, a discourse of post-shamanism? That is what has kept me thinking since the arrival of those two Indians from the Northern bush to the city where I lived in 1985.

1493.

In Cordoba, Liberato was asked to help and do something about a terrible drought. Fields were drying up, nights would not arrive after the day, animals were dying. He asked how

much rain would be needed. That is a lot, he answered, when he got a potential response (in inches) from the astounded people with whom we were sharing dinner. My father accompanied him to the banks of a nearby river where Liberato sang, while walking around and throwing sand to the air: a prayer. Days later we were back in Buenos Aires where the news of storms occurring in Cordoba reached us. First my father read about it in the national papers. Then a friend called us. 'Tell the Indian to stop the rain now' he said to us, jokingly. 'It has been raining non-stop, it is a deluge'.

'Well, they asked for too many kilos, grandson', was the prosaic, quiet response of the silent man.

13.

The image of the cannibal is a crucial locus around which some debates on Latin American modernity have been articulated. In 1900, the Uruguayan critic Jose Rodo wrote a manifesto-like book, *Ariel*, playing around the characters in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The role of the continent was to be that of the servile assistant to his Lord Prospero. In the 1960s a new figure from that play was vindicated as the model for the modernist dispersion of values that the region conveys: Caliban, the marginal savage whose anagrammatic name reminds of processes of eating the Same and processing the Other. Caliban's island having been invaded in a movement that prefigures the imposition of the language of the coloniser, the narrative emerges as a metaphor of the Latin American modern. This view has been developed by the Cuban critic Roberto Fernandez Retamar, who traces back the origin of the word 'cannibal' to 'Carib'; the name of the indigenous people that were living in Cuba at the time of the Spanish conquistadores' arrival.⁴⁰

Recently, Mexican sociologist Gonzalez Casanova has claimed that current stagings of the Shakespearean play at the Old Vic Theatre in London have been influenced by these Latin American critiques.⁴¹

66.

My friend narrates in his book on the Toba the blackouts in Salta, near Bolivia, where Toba Indians go every year as migrant workers. The military authorities, in complicity with the owners of the sugar refineries, would leave the towns without electricity and come with trucks to 'disappear' hundreds of union leaders and workers. Many of them were from the Toba communities. This was symbolised by people as a return of the 'Familiar' dog, a popular myth from the peasant cultures of northern Argentina. It is a narration about a diabolic dog that eats human flesh, a legend that apparently comes from medieval Spain and that preserves—in the name of the monstrous dog—the family ties that relate kin and the horror of the occult in many world regions.⁴² It could be read as a Latin American instance of Freud's

concept of the 'uncanny': objects and beings that are familiar and bizarre at the very same time: impossible entities that disrupt time and meaning, thus producing horror.⁴³

56.

Did Larrea meet Bataille in Paris? I imagine that fortuitous rendezvous at a cafe, or a party, at a time when Larrea frequented most of the main avant-garde writers. Sometimes I read echoes of Bataille's obsessions in the poetic prose of Larrea, though so different in its tone and aims. But the characters of these stories keep crossing paths. Reading Mettraux's diaries, I search for something unknown, yet somehow obvious, until I find it. The entry devoted to Mettraux's arrival in Mexico City, where he is met at the airport by his former professor Paul Rivet and a certain Mr Juan Larrea.⁴⁴

1969.

One cold night, years ago, I was staying at a friend's place, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, when I had a sort of premonition. I was drunk, and I could vividly see them, very clearly: a man and a woman. They were too close to me for them not to represent the exact measure of myself. 'Juan, it is us. We are dead'. They were speaking to me as though from another dimension, as if they were located already in a near, although distant, future. It was at the same time frightening and comforting. They said to me that I would, one day, soon, dedicate a book to the man's memory.

14.

Something started obsessing me a few years ago. I have begun thinking about those films where you listen to a conversation but the scene does not match what is being said. Scene and sound are disjointed. Images and words are out of sync. Some time later, the characters perform the acts that were the actual staging of the conversation that took place before. That took place before. Before.

I began thinking that the peculiar dialectics between matter and memory implied in that seizing of a place by an event and its recalling are greatly illuminated by what the avant-garde filmmakers were performing. The repetition of an original disjunction. A distorted history that took place elsewhere.⁴⁵

The out of sync effect takes seconds, which are like years. It is not a flashback. Rather, it is located somewhere between a déjà vu and the False Memory Syndrome. I am constantly haunted by this effect and by the problem of how it is possible to produce the same event in writing.

Last year I realised that I was going to try to think about time and memory as tracks moving at different speeds. Perhaps they can be slowed down, or accelerated, as in Walter Benjamin's *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, constructed around poetic visions of time which are so influenced by avantgarde films. Those gears of memory are like Eisenstein's project of a film version of Marx's Capital.⁴⁶

I think that if that operation could be produced, that would throw light on the healing dreams of the shamans I met. Working at different temporalities and distances at the same time, as well as curing, through the images. How do we do that with writing?

2498.

It could be labeled a *sync-drome*. Somehow, suddenly, through a slight of hand of reasons and the way my own history was unfolding, I came to have a sense of memory as not being an individual practice.

I guess I did, I can't remember so well. That was months ago. Or last week. I think I already wrote it tonight, a few moments ago. Or maybe not. Memory is not an individual device ... memory is a structure that works by itself, through subjects. Across all of us. Memory remembers. Our recollections are the residues of the aura irradiated by this machine.

22.3.

I wanted—I will always want—to achieve that effect through writing. To represent your absence. To call you, screaming silent, mute words.

76.

In Cordoba Liberato and Jacobo sort of initiated me and my family. They gave us feathered crowns and appointed us as honorary chiefs of their communities. Then they affirmed they would pass on a power to us. In my case, they produced something out of their own body, from their mouth or chest—I do not remember exactly. It was a *bright Argentinean fifty cent coin*. They showed it to me. Then they pronounced some words in Toba—in Qom—and they acted as though they were putting it inside of me, through my back. They said the power was going to grow in my interior along the years. My younger brother did not need anything, supposedly he already had the power within himself. Perhaps someday I will show Mick (who knew some shamans too) that room in my house, in Cordoba.⁴⁷

19.

To call you, to caress your heart, to heal you, to look at the two sides of the moon simultaneously.

1936.

Larrea and Jose Bergamin had commissioned Picasso—on behalf of the Republican Government in exile—to paint the *Guernica* for the Spanish Republic's pavilion at the 1937 World Exhibition in Paris. They sold copies of the painter's litograph 'Franco's Dream and Lie', to raise funds for the event.

Larrea used to visit Picasso every day in his study and he attended the unveiling of that surreal depiction of violence and rationalist insanity: foreshadowings. He discussed with him the various distorted motifs of victimhood. Picasso entrusted his painting to the

Museum of Modern Art in New York, which invited Larrea to lecture on his analysis of the painting in 1947.

Picasso was always located one second before or one second after the event. His portrait of how memory and time work is captured in those images he painted with electric light. With a little lantern, he used to draw in the air a dove, a scintillating fast sketching, which due to an electric effect, was to be seen, perceived by our eyes, for an eternal instant. After the fact.

365.

Images and voices are out of joint. In other rooms, other voices. How can I do that through writing? Perhaps I did it a few pages ago. Already.

457.

I guess I am nothing. I am a spectre too. Yesterday I thought that quite soon I will be dust, ashes, and dreams. I remember that. While I read about Africa and politics and novels and Michel Leiris⁴⁸ on the theatre of the Zaar shamans in the Sudan and the accursed shares of his dear friend Bataille⁴⁹ and the fake—all too real—atmosphere of the healing performances, so far away, so close. I guess I am just a point at the crossroads where images and words intersect. Even if they are, somehow, slightly out of joint.

I occupy a space where shamanism, surrealism, memory, love, death, violence, law, politics and theatre at times calmly, at times violently, transgress each other, cross each other's limits. I guess I am some sort of interface. And what do I make of that? And how do I write about that?

Yesterday morning I thought about all this and I remembered, all of a sudden, that one of these nights I am going to sit at my wooden desk and I will recall that other night in which I met Liberato and Jacobo and some of the events that have happened since. And I will write down the words that you are reading at this instant.

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1. A first version of this Text was written in 1999 for a presentation at a monthly nocturnal seminar on 'shamanism', a 'temporary autonomous zone' convened in New York City by Mick Taussig and Hakim Bey. I thank the organisers and participants of that discussion group, as well as

my family and many good friends for providing me with suggestions and reminiscences. I thank the editors of *Cultural Studies Review* and two anonymous reviewers for the 'objective chance'. (This was the concept evoked by the hosts of that first lecture when engaging this series of

- recollections). Above all, I am grateful to Kumachichi and Nahedi.
2. Until the nineteenth century, Toba (Komlek) people were a semi-nomadic hunter-gatherer group. The last Argentine national census (2001) indicates that around 60 000 people consider themselves as belonging to this ethnic group (the largest of the Guaycuru linguistic family), mostly dwelling in agricultural settlements in the provinces of Chaco and Formosa. The Toba were the group that most successfully opposed the military conquest of the Gran Chaco region until around 1880 when they began to be decimated and relegated to the most inhospitable areas of the Chaco bush land. In 1919, the last great Toba insurgency was defeated in Napalpi, Chaco. Many Tobas started working at sugar cane refineries and cotton plantations in Salta and Chaco, under deplorable conditions that included debt peonage. At present, many Tobas work for periods of the year in large urban centers in Northern Argentina. Small communities have settled in the economically depressed outskirts of cities in Chaco, Santa Fe or Buenos Aires provinces. On ethnography of the Toba see Alfred Metraux, 'Ethnography of the Chaco' in Julian Steward (ed.), *Handbook of South American Indians*, vol. 1, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, 1946; Elmer Miller, *Los Tobas Argentinos: armonia y disonancia en una sociedad*, Siglo XXI, Mexico, 1979; Edgardo Cordeu and Alejandra Siffredi, *De la Algarroba al algodón: Movimientos Milenaristas del Chaco Argentino*, Juarez Editor, Buenos Aires, 1971.
 3. Sydney Mintz, 'Introduction', in Alfred Metraux, *Voodoo in Haiti*, Schocken Books, New York, 1989.
 4. See the article/memoir by Metraux included in the special issue of *Critique* in homage to Bataille, Alfred Metraux, 'Rencontre avec des ethnologues', *Critique*, no. 195–196, 1963, pp. 677–84. Bataille died in 1962, Metraux committed suicide on 12 April 1963, in Valle de Chevreuse, France.
 5. Metraux, one of Europe's foremost ethnographers, was at the centre of the connections between anthropology and avant-garde literature. With regards to the College of Sociology, besides a deep camaraderie with Bataille and Caillois, Metraux also maintained a long-standing friendship with its third convenor: Michel Leiris wrote the forward to the second edition of Metraux, *Voodoo in Haiti*.
 6. Avvakum Petrovich, a schismatic Orthodox priest was the first European who reported on Siberian medicine men circa 1672, defining them with the Tungus term *shaman*.
 7. I refer throughout the essay to 'Shamanism' as a totalising discourse constructed on various non-Western practices of ecstatic healing. Diderot defined shamans as 'impostors' in the *Encyclopedia*. Goethe and other Enlightenment figures echoed the irruption of this *foreign* figure in European high culture. See Gloria Flaherty, *Shamanism and the Eighteenth Century*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1992; see also Jeremy Narby and Francis Huxley (eds), *Shamans Through Time: 500 Years on the Path to Knowledge*. Jeremy P. Tarcher, Putnam, New York, 2000. For two opposing poles of analysis see the negative ontology perspective in Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, Princeton Bollingen, Princeton, NJ, 1974; and a historico-materialist approach in Nicholas Thomas and Caroline Humphrey (eds) *Shamanism, History and the State*, Michigan University Press, Ann Arbor, 1996.
 8. On the Toba re-semantisation of the gospel and evangelic practice as a hybrid complex, *Evangelio*, which is in contradiction with shamanism, see Pablo Wright, 'Toba Pentecostalism Re-visited', *Social Compass*, vol. 39, no. 3.
 9. On cannibalism and Western discourse on the savage in the Pacific, see Gananath Obeyesekere, *Cannibal Talk: The Man-eating Myth and Human Sacrifice in the South Seas*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2005; see also on West Africa, Peter Geschiere, *Rubber and Cannibalism: The Germans, the Maka and the Rubber Boom in South Cameroon (1900–1914)*, ms, Amsterdam 1998.
 10. As Caliban was a reversed cannibal in the book of Prospero, the Brazilians, misquoting Hamlet's dictum, approached the Tupi as a reversal of Shakespeare. See Oswald de Andrade's 'Manifesto Antropofago'. Jorge Schwartz, *Vanguardia y Cosmopolitismo del Veinte*, Beatriz Viterbo, Buenos Aires, 1993. For a not entirely unrelated account on Hamlet in a West African setting, see Laura Bohannon, 'Shakespeare in the Bush', *Natural History*, August–September, 1966.
 11. On the accursed share of devil pacts and Christian imagery see Michael Taussig, 'The Sun Gives Without Receiving: An Old Story', *Comparative Studies of Society and History*, vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 368–98, 1995; for references on the Toba, see Gaston Gordillo, 'The Breath of the Devils: Memories and Places of an Experience of Terror', *American Ethnologist*, vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 33–57, February 2002.
 12. Carlos Reynoso, *El surgimiento de la antropología posmoderna*, Gedisa, Mexico, 1998.
 13. See the pamphlet 'Ayahuasca and Shamanism, Michael Taussig interviewed by Peter Lamborn Wilson', Autonomedia, New York, 2002. Throughout Taussig's *oeuvre* the figure of the shaman is unveiled as a construct of Western colonial discourse, an approach that involved

- dread and adoration, ascribing to the 'wild man' both animality and super-human senses.
14. The concept of the remainder (*le reste*), as residual non-object from the economy of the dialectic, features prominently in Derrida's work. It represents an ethereal excess that escapes the circuit of binary polarities. Its most evocative appearances are found in *Glas and Given Time*, where Derrida develops the contiguity between the concepts of the remainder and the gift. See Jacques Derrida, *Glas*, English translation by John Leavey, Jr. and Richard Rand, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1986 and *Given Time: I Counterfeit Money*, University of Chicago Press, 1992.
 15. See the script co-authored by Luis Buñuel and Juan Larrea, 'Ilisible, Fils d'une Flute' "Positif", no. 50, pp. 51–2, Paris, 1963, a project for a film that Buñuel never shot, based on prose poem by Larrea.
 16. Juan Larrea, *A Tooth for a Tooth: Selected Poems (1925–1932)*, translated and with an introduction by David Bary, University Press of America, Lanham 1987.
 17. Andre Malraux defined Buenos Aires as the 'capital of an empire that has never existed'. The avant-gardes trespassed this city in the first half of the century. Marcel Duchamp abandoned New York and lived there for nine months with his wife, doing little more than surviving in isolation on a bohemian lifestyle, endlessly playing chess, searching for his friend poet Mina Loy and awaiting for the arrival of her husband Arthur Cravan. In a letter of 12 November 1918 he declared: 'Buenos Aires does not exist. It is a provincial town with tasteless rich people who buy everything in Europe. I have even found a French toothpaste which I had forgotten about in New York.' He adds in another letter, of February 1919: 'One can only go to the theater.' See Jorge Fondebrider (ed.), *La Buenos Aires ajena: Testimonios de extranjeros de 1536 hasta hoy*, Emecé, Buenos Aires, 2001. Also, Raul Antelo, *Maria con Marcel Duchamp en los Tropicos*, Siglo XXI, Buenos Aires, 2006.
 18. Elmer Miller, 'Shamans, Power Symbols and Change in Argentinean Toba Culture', *American Ethnologist*, vol. 2, no. 3, pp. 447–96.
 19. Jean de Lery in Jean Claude Morisot (ed), *Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brelli, autrement dite Amerique (1578)*, Droz, Geneva, 1975. See also Frank Lestringant, 'The Philosopher's Breviary: Jean de Lery in the Enlightenment', *Representations*, no. 33, *The New World*, Winter, 1991, pp. 200–11.
 20. See Michel de Certeau, 'Ethno-Graphy: Speech, or the Space of the Other: Jean de Lery', in *The Writing of History*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1975.
 21. The father of structuralism, who famously 'hates voyages and explorers' praises Jean de Lery in his own travelogue on the Tupinamba. On arrival in Rio de Janeiro in 1934, Levi-Strauss carried with him a 'manual for ethnographers': Lery's chronicle. See his *Tristes Tropiques*, Penguin, New York, 1972.
 22. Scholars tend to agree on Lery's text as the foundation for Montaigne's 'On cannibals'. There, on the subject of alleged cannibalism among inhabitants of 'Antartic France' (Brazil), Montaigne writes (based on interviews of sorts with a savage man): 'I find (as far as I have been informed), there is nothing in that nation that is either barbarous or savage, unless men call that barbarism which is not common to them'.
 23. James Clifford, 'On ethnographic surrealism' in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature and Art*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1989. For an attempt to unpack Clifford's concepts with regard to crisis of self and subjectivity, see Juan Obarrio, 'Artaud/Larrea: Surrealismo Etnografico en Latinoamerica', in *Dissens*, no. 3, Berlin, 1997; and <<http://www.javeriana.edu.co/pensar/Rev32.html>>; Jean Jamin, 'Documents ... et le reste. De la anthropologie dans les bas-fonds', *La Revue des Revues*, no. 18, 1994, p. 17; and 'La part maudite de l'ethnographie', *L'Homme*, p. 151, 1999; See also the journals *Documents*, Bernard Noel (ed.), *Mercur de France*, Paris, 1968 ; VVV, New York, 1942–1944 and *International Situationniste*, Paris, 1958–1969; Situationist International Online, <<http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/>>.
 24. Larrea published (through the mediation of Benjamin Peret of *Nadja* fame) excerpts of his text 'Nuestra Alba de Oro' in the journal VVV (June 1942) edited in New York by Andre Breton and Marcel Duchamp.
 25. 'Cavidad Verbal' in Juan Larrea, *Version Celeste*, Seix-Barral, Barcelona, 1970.
 26. George Marcus (ed.), *Perilous States: Conversations on Culture, Politics, and Nation*. University of Chicago Press, 1994.
 27. César Vallejo, *España, aparte de mí este cáliz*, edición comentada por Juan Larrea, al cuidado y notas de Felipe D. Obarrio, con la colaboración de Juan Manuel Obarrio, Ediciones de la Torre, Madrid, 1992.
 28. Vittorio Bodini, *Los Poetas Surrealistas Españoles*, Tusquets, Barcelona 1971, C. Morris, *Surrealism and Spain 1920–1936*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1972.

29. Jorge Luis Borges, 'Conjectural Poem', in *Personal Anthology*, Grove Press, New York, 1967
30. Edgar Allan Poe, 'The Purloined Letter', in Muller, P. John and J. William Richardson, (eds), *The Purloined Poe: Lacan, Derrida and Psychoanalytic Reading*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988. The volume includes Lacan's critical reading of Poe's tale and Derrida's discussion of Lacan's perspective. Derrida also refers to Dupin, his inheritance and the ashes of his cigars as remainders in *Given Time*.
31. Gaston Gordillo, *Landscapes of Devils: Tensions of Place and Memory in the Argentinean Chaco*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2004.
32. See Alan Schrift, *The Logic of the Gift*, Routledge, New York, 1997; Christopher Bracken, *The Potlatch Papers: A Colonial Case History*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Chicago, 1997.
33. Don De Lillo, 'The Art of Fiction 135: Interview by Adam Begley', *The Paris Review*, 128, Fall 1993.
34. Departing from the phrase 'Cinders there are', Derrida develops a thinking of ashes as traces and as 'remainders without remainder'. He links this, in a homage to Paul Celan, to a memory of the Holocaust. See Jacques Derrida, *Cinders*, University of Nebraska Press, NB, 1991; and on Celan's poems on ashes, see Jacques Derrida, *Schibboleth pour Paul Celan*, Galilée, Paris, 1986. In an interview Derrida declares: 'Cinder is an absolute non-memory', Jacques Derrida 'Entretien avec Jacques Derrida' in *Digraphe* 42, December 1987.
35. Benjamin attended Caillouis's lecture on 'Festival' at the College of Sociology as referenced by Dennis Hollier in *The College of Sociology 1937–1939*, trans. Betsy Wing, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1988, p. xxi.
36. See Walter Benjamin in Roy Tiedemann (ed.), *The Arcades Project*, Belknap Press, 2002.
37. See Uki Goñi, *The Real Odessa: The Nazi Escape Operation to Peron's Argentina*, Granta, London, 2002.
38. Letter to Gretel Adorno, of 17 January 1940. Walter Benjamin in Gershom Scholem and Theodor W. Adorno (eds), *The Correspondence of Walter Benjamin, 1910–1940*, trans. Manfred R. Jacobson, University of Chicago Press, 1994.
39. On the empty place of power at the core of democracy see Claude Lefort, *L'invention démocratique. Les limites de la domination totalitaire*, Livre de Poche, Paris, 1983, p. 95 and *Essais sur le politique. XIXe–XXe siècles*, Seuil, Paris, 1986, pp. 265–66. See Lefort's 'The Permanence of the Theologico-Political?', in *Democracy and Political Theory*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1988.
40. Roberto Gonzalez Retamar, *Caliban and Other Essays*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1989.
41. Pablo González Casanova, 'La dialéctica de la tempestad', *La Jornada*, 12 December 2002, Mexico City.
42. See Hugo Trinchero, *Los dominios del demonio. Civilización y Barbarie en las fronteras de la Nación*. Buenos Aires, Eudeba, 2000.
43. Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, Penguin Books, New York, 2003.
44. Alfred Metraux, *Itinéraires*, introduction and notes by Andre-Marcel d'Ans, Payot, Paris, 1978.
45. Gilles Deleuze refers to this 'false sync' effect in the films of Straub, Duras or Resnais. He defines it as 'a 'piece of pure time and not a present'. See his interview with Cahiers du Cinema 'The Brain is the Screen', *Two Regimes of Madness*, Semiotexte, New York, 2006, p. 291.
46. Annette Michelson, 'Reading Eisenstein Reading "Capital"', *October*, vol. 2, pp. 26–38, Summer, 1976.
47. On this type of initiation and a historico-political relation between Toba shamanism and the image of the gaucho and the white landowner see Florencia Carmen Tola, 'Relaciones de poder y apropiación del "otro" en relatos sobre iniciaciones shamánicas en el Chaco argentino', *Journal de la Société des Américanistes*, 87, 2001, pp. 197–210.
48. Michel Leiris, 'La Possession Et Ses Aspects Theatraux Chez Les Ethiopiens De Gondar' in *Miroir de l'Afrique*, Gallimard, Paris, 1996 ; Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, vol. I, New York, 1997.
49. A genealogy of the remainder as surplus should go back to Bataille's concept of *the accursed share* and its original expression as *the impossible*. Elizabeth Roudinesco and Slavoj Zizek have noted the analogy between Bataille's perspective and Lacan's concept of the Real. See Elizabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1997 and Slavoj Zizek, *The Parallax View*, MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 2006.