

Theme proposal and outline plan of the multidisciplinary and international art competition Oscar Niemeyer in Tripoli (Lebanon) by Daniel Guibert for the project of Jocelyne Saab as part of the festival: Cultural Resistance: International Film Festival of Lebanon, Opus 2014-2015. (9 pages)

Parataxis and Para()sites

PARATAXIS PHILO

In 2001, following a violent article published in a French magazine against the book “Society,” written by the philosopher, novelist, and poet Mehdi Belhaj Kacem—where he was treated with contempt as a “*para-philosopher*” by a young reductionist journalist, supporter of the latest Bourdieu—I built in response an article entitled “*Parataxis Philo in MBK*” for the digital magazine “*Criticalsecret*”¹ because “*Enquête sur la phénoménologie du vampire*” (Investigation on the Phenomenology of the Vampire) by the same author was the contra-avant-garde founding ironic text of this digital magazine first installment. Defending him as I did, I anticipated without my knowledge what his written work most powerfully manifested, even when it led to the great philosophical discourse “*L'esprit du nihilisme une ontologique de l'Histoire*” (The Spirit of Nihilism: an Ontological on History) in 2009, which followed “*Évènement et répétition*” (Event and Repetition), in 2004, where he diverged the direction of Deleuze’s metaphysics of motion. The “*Esprit du nihilism*” is a discussion constructed such that, in relation with its strict philosophical references and through its parataxical reflection path, it became accidentally possible to observe a watermarked anthropological key to a poetic creation signing the overall work of MBK, in cycles—from one rupture to the next—since his first novel *Cancer* (1994). In a proper implementation of the philosophical movement understood as a juxtaposition of cycles and their disruptions—after all, Zeno's arrow might have predicted the advent of cinema—which instead remained otherwise undecidable or at least omitted in Deleuze’s, one can predict MBK’s long-term design process. Much like the rhetoric of the book, the act of reading was operating a parataxis between what was said and the personal bibliography of the author—that is precisely what this book kept at a distance. The difference between parataxis and *para-thunder* or *para-pharmacy* comes from the second part of the word that contextualizes what is beside, about, the exogenous, through organization. Parataxis is a two-fold word which, by means of an ellipsis, positions the context (the prefix) in relation with the object (the suffix): *Parataxis* in Latin—Greek for “the act of placing side by side” from *para* “beside” and *tassein* “to hold,” organization by juxtaposition.

For the record this term incidentally refers in English to a difference, even an opposite in “syntax”—it does not exist in French—or even an opposition to the “hypotaxis” (abundance of subordinate clauses in the same sentence, or consecutively), because the latter could lead

¹In <http://www.criticalsecret.com/users/danielguibert/>; under the rubric : “Read any Article.” See also Gerhard Richter, *Language Without Soil: Adorno and Late Philosophical Modernity*, Publisher: Fordham Scholarship Online, March 2011.

to confusion: this is not the case with parataxis which prevents confusion while allowing more to be perceived and imagined; it generates “topoi” and thus allows to understand, design, position, and in particular leads to the language about art.

An essay by Jose Teixeira Coelho Netto² was published the same year as “Society”, late in relation to its subject. Perhaps this explains why it has not been translated into French: a polemic work that integrates political judgment and critical philosophy of modernity and post-modernity. The author is also an epistemologist of arts and a semiotician of information and communication³, and a specialist in design and architecture. In this book⁴ he situates both cinema and architecture where Oscar Niemeyer does not particularly appear despite Brasilia being present as a significant background to a critical counterpoint in the work of the filmmaker Glauber Rocha, whose personality and movies are of interest to the author. We will then see what is missing: the consistency in parataxis of the results built among Niemeyer’s works and architectonic. It involves the Cinema Novo including Rocha, whose own speech (including his aesthetic and political manifestos: “*Aesthetic of Hunger*”—1965, and “*Aesthetic of Dream*”—1971) informs the parataxical arrangement of his thought, his learning, his perceptions, and his filmic expression corresponding to both the diversity of the Brazilian society and the equivalent sum of its different cultures.

Jose Teixeira Coelho Netto is inspired by the philosopher of science Paul Karl Feyerabend whose original book published in 1975 in London and in 1979 in France “*Contre la méthode, Esquisse d’une théorie anarchiste de la connaissance*”⁵ (“*Against Method, Outline of an Anarchist Theory of Knowledge*”) which had already been around the world, empowered the concatenation of free thought, not entrapped by modernist rationalism, hyperactive in research. It situates parataxis, mentioned explicitly, not to express the appearance of postmodern creations (as a kind of knowledge on a historical timeline of the forms that would appear anachronistically reused by informed creators), but the random process of a major inspiration in the conception of things, inspiration that situates itself in both the context and the social environment of artists and their social life as experience (or challenge), as well as a sensitivity to the world of images (Jose Teixeira Coelho Netto evokes, still, shadowy images and their random emergence in Warburg) in a disorderly and anarchic emergence presiding over the originality of the works.

These works remain, from a point of view, a lyrical expression of their time, that is to say poetic. Discursive syntax of these reappearances would be spontaneous or automatic, and in any case built in real time as the works are being gestated. Hence, Jose Teixeira Coelho Netto sees a kind of anthropology, not a historical archeology of images but the creation of public images of art, taken from an intimate archeology where he also situates the cinema of

² *Moderno pós moderno: modos & versões*, Iluminuras, Brazil, 2001-2005.

³ Jose Teixeira Coelho Netto, *Semiótica, Informação e Comunicação*, Debates, Editora Perspectiva, Brazil, 1980.

⁴ See note 2.

⁵ *Against Method, Outline of an Anarchist Theory of Knowledge*, Publisher: Humanities Press, London, 1975: “The following essay has been written in the conviction that *anarchism*, while perhaps not the most attractive *political* philosophy, is certainly an excellent foundation for *epistemology*, and for the *philosophy of science*. The reason is not difficult to find.” p. 17; French translation: *Contre la méthode*, Paris, Publisher: Editions du Seuil, 1979, 350 p.

Jean-Luc Godard. In an issue of the magazine "*Positif* " in 1968⁶, Rocha expressed his connection with the cinema that existed before him and appeared to connote his own creative actuality; he says that in Brazil, contrary to Europe, modernity is not being discovered through a historical perspective but asynchronously and formally, he then began to show interest in Dada, which was a radical critique (the contact with *Oswald de Andrade*⁷ also cited by Jose Teixeira Coelho Netto necessarily comes up to mind). Knowledge of modernity was not anticipated but emerged step by step from the creation itself as a multilinear necessity of consciousness on the path to the production of works.

About parataxis, the English definition will be adopted partly "para-phrasing" the following paragraph, clearer than in French, from which one can draw a suggestion of a "proposed asset" for a competition of ideas and/or plastic productions, filmic and/or literary.

Parataxis is primarily a literary technique derived from Latin rhetoric, to write and speak with juxtaposed sentences (short in principle or very simple), providing meaning through coordination rather than with the use of subordinate clauses. It is a figure to treat the multiple and the diverse.

We wish to extend this figure of speech beyond its disciplinary boundaries in both an external and internal consideration of one or many designs introduced by competition. Because it can be both a proposed general perspective on things being observed (external), therefore useful in evaluating events and productions, and a more specific perspective on design (internal) framed by disciplines or transgressions, including the creative behavior (productive) itself: resources, methodology, language of art about objects being produced, etc.

One sees here the opportunity of a vision of coexistence and juxtapositions rather than integration between singularity and multiplicity, a concept that can relate to both the being and the other, and also to society, to things and among them, and the whole. It is not the traditional republican or democratic vision between the individual, the community and the state that is supposed to be the administrator. Thus this concerns the equipment, laws, etc. Where differently lies the question of relations of one to the others: it can indeed be applicable to people, disciplines, and productions, or for the purpose of research.

In research, this suggests the relative autonomy and their fruitful juxtaposition, not disorder but the sum of their conspicuous actions and their various situations in time posed as equivalent. This point of view liberates conception as well as formal and intellectual assignments, and also the participatory coercion of agents gathered in a joint production or in their social and collective existence.

For us, it means that a proposition of subordination should not become applicable to disciplinary fields or doctrines, would they be scientific, but instead insubordination and, if necessary, recalcitrance. Therefore it is not a rhetorical model to reproduce nor a nomenclature for analysis. Thus, the term impertinence reveals its paradox that what is irrelevant for some may nevertheless express relevance for others. And since there is no

⁶ Thanks to Olivier Hadouchi for having provided the information about the interview of Michel Ciment and Piero Arlorio with Glauber Rocha, "*Positive*" No. 91—January 1968.

⁷ 1890-1954, Brazilian poet and polemicist (Sao Paulo), see his "*Manifesto Antropófago*" (*Cannibal Manifesto*) published in 1928.

dogma, the reoccurrence of traditions or strict disciplines would not necessarily pose any problems, since they would be in association with unruly productions—equivalence of presentation is one of the qualities of parataxis.

The point of view from a quest for a concept that generates creative energy, parataxis, liberates participants from any sense of guilt, juniors to seniors alike, takes an iconoclastic twist in which unexpected participants may arise and productions unfold surprises. It is also a quest for innovation within competitiveness.

CONTEXT

The “*International Film Festival Tripoli: Cultural Resistance*” became “*Cultural Resistance International Film Festival of Lebanon*” and hosts this year, as in its first installment last year, new filmic visions of the world and of populations in motion in art cinema and experimental films, and emerging genres. We have noticed that, in the two titles above, the phrase “cultural resistance” keeps a prominent place. This is why we suggest juxtaposition be the figure of choice rather than (or against) subordination.

Especially this year, the festival features the opening of a film competition, but also extended to other art forms, or even a competition of architectural ideas around the theme of Oscar Niemeyer, the architect, whose unfinished *World Fair Center* space in Tripoli has become both a symbol of resistance and the materialization of desynchronization of time and administrative communities in today's Lebanon. It is in this context that the concept of parataxis, because it seems to correspond to the state of urban and social sedimentation and its juxtapositions still occurring today, as well as the current Lebanese political breakdown, is proposed as a generative theme for creation and the readings thereof, which could be produced through a singular view of Lebanon as it reveals itself today.

This World Fair Center space designed by Niemeyer is now named “*Rashid Karami International Fair*”, in tribute to this personality from Tripoli, then prime minister of Lebanon, who was assassinated in 1987. He had a political, creative and economic will to develop his hometown by means of a project capable of opening up Lebanese economic activities.

In 1962, a consultation organized by a renewal of the Lebanese reformist state and the city of Tripoli choose the Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, internationally renowned⁸, for the design and execution of the Permanent International Fair of Tripoli. This happened to him not long after the conception and realization, with his teacher and friend Lucio Costa (author of the master plan for the future city of Brasilia)—himself in charge of the design of the

⁸ In 1947 in New York, several architects shared the international responsibility to design the headquarters of the United Nations (UN): “The American architect Wallace Harrison, named chief architect, had the title of Director of construction plans. To assist him, a consulting architect bureau was created, whose 10 members were appointed by governments.” Among them, Charles-Édouard Jeanneret, known as Le Corbusier (France), Oscar Niemeyer (Brazil). <http://www.un.org/fr/aboutun/history/unhqhist.shtml>. Le Corbusier was one of the referents of Niemeyer, kind of initiatory master of modernism; he develops his defiant position towards academic and regionalist teaching when studying at the School of Architecture of Rio. Referent with whom he will have his first conflict, however, about the general project management of the “UN” operation. The second conflict arose about the buildings of Brasilia.

buildings—the glorious federal capital of Brazil, decentralized⁹ in the high desert plateaus in the central region of the country. The execution was entrusted to a company (NOVACAP) that did not agree symbolically and politically with the designers—such is the actual fate of architectural works, always rooted in the paradox of ends and means.

Thus in Tripoli, despite the will of President Fouad Chehab and studies of the *Institut de Recherche et de Formation en vue du Développement* (Institute for Research and Training towards Development) led by Father Louis Joseph Lebret, five years of study and development, including many political battles, deliberations and legal negotiations, will be required to integrate a modified draft of Niemeyer's initial design upon expropriation of 70 acres of land, elliptical or lens-shaped, to create an autonomous land easement, oriented on its small axis from east to west, between the old city and the Mediterranean coast, and for its major axis from north to south between the port area (El Mina) and extensions south toward Beirut; to stop a multifunctional program; to design implementation plans and definitively moderate Niemeyer's vision to realize about this operation a subsequent urban development: a literal tri-polarity of the city. Construction work will only begin in 1967¹⁰.

Eight years later, the Lebanon War (1975–1990) shifts international trade efforts to war, national and regional budgets. The architectonic device WFC, though nearing completion, will remain under construction. Having been occupied during the war by various armed militias by the Syrian and Lebanese army without having been particularly transformed or scarred, this place cleared of rubble and waste results in a landscaped park, distributing “factories” established in this vast walking space, intended for the masses that were never formally invited¹¹. This confers the place with the ability to still inspire dreams and projects of occupancy.

It is not a dislocated, abandoned space: protected by the city of Tripoli, despite rifts among the community, in the form of a monument that can be rehabilitated in terms of usage, potentially that is, is a historical and plastic masterpiece with its available space that can attract and seduce like a large scale urban art installation, an expanse by the sea shore...

There it presents itself, a symbolic place, open to the prospect of monumental follies among lawns, ponds and maintained plantations, as if it were a large public monument, a kind of sanctuary of modernity: a peace haven—or in the waiting for peace—its fate suspended, like the Lebanese utopia of a multiple and constructive international culture, in the current time where the national Lebanon culture (as in many other countries) seems to have disintegrated. This place remains open for various events, on rare occasions and despite the ever present border instability. Why a change be formulated where transmutation should be preferred? How one can multiply its becoming?

⁹ The project of a new capital was passed by the Brazilian Congress on the 19th of September, 1956. The city of Brasilia was inaugurated on the 21st of April, 1960, the University of Brasilia (UNB) in 1962. The coordination of the School of Architecture with UNB was granted to Oscar Niemeyer.

¹⁰ According to the synthesis article from Jab Tabet, “*Le projet de Foire Internationale d’Oscar Niemeyer à Tripoli, Liban*” (1968-1974), in “*Suspended Space # 2—une expérience collective*”, pp. 22-27, Publisher : BlackJack, Paris, 2012.

¹¹ Except some attempts at branded commercial exhibitions and a proposal from the architect Raphael Moneo to develop a Disneyland-type theme park.

At this point, we can distinguish between a usage which Pierre Klossowski described as “utilitarian” (functional and therefore not free, venal) or “ustensiliary” (free, art as response, the curse of expenditure and pleasure, a celebration with unpredictable effects), in his book “*Living Currency*”¹² about desire and sexuality, here applied to the ethical question of the usefulness / uselessness of a space made available to public or to those who would convene it in various forms.

Historical and architectural constructive referents inhabiting the perception of these utilities that remained without use, exposed as edifying ruins of a performative art of reinforced concrete, situating a time by its technical history, are numerous even for who does not know the “style” of Niemeyer¹³ and its temporal formation. Besides all that is being philosophically superimposed in these material juxtapositions of places and abstractions, thought and imagined from their incompleteness, and the obsolete social perception they give to feel, it deeply questions the large expense and common sense.

The eye catching concrete leaves dust-free ruins. Its shore location at the foot of Tripoli that this incompleteness curiously separates from the sea, through the persistent existence of this place beyond its uselessness (which could have faced the fate of destruction, be reinvested) is a miracle, one due to the symbolic relation kept alive by the personalities who let it exist in tribute to Rashid Karami, who dared to think that this dashing project of urban tri-polarity could finally be assumed. Cosmic and redeemed under the light, a wake, and a trail of many humanities. What is this pattern in the environment of our time, without culture, but a paradigm of long gone culture: a geo-ecological pattern in the reliefs and faults of the geopolitical status that encompasses the entire Middle East and the world? An objective cultural resistance unexpectedly emerged from its inertia or, maybe, even better, from its excess.

PARADIGM

Take note of the unexpected. Everything that happens not only for survival but as a symbol emerging (e.g. new or indelible urban practices) in the objective diversion of the prior assignment of the premises (for the Niemeyer space in Tripoli: international trade, its global recycling...) Facing the contemporary decay of the material, technical, and cultural worlds, where Lebanon would be a kind of archetype or laboratory: in the “laboratory” case it could be considered that the Lebanese society is parataxical in all its social community elements, and para-state as far as control is concerned (including national equipment and services) tend for the redefinition of the alliance that could instruct the state corresponding to a new democratic of rights, according to the emerging social diversity of the communities; and this at a time when some European countries would need to learn a few lessons. Therefore, the assumption is that in Lebanon since the war, despite the incidental violence near the Syrian War and Israeli wars against the Palestinians, the social disintegration and administrative

¹² Originally published in French: *La Monnaie vivante*, with photographs of Pierre Zucca, Publisher: Eric Losfeld, Paris, 1970; alternate edition without photographs published by Joëlle Losfeld, Paris, 1994.

¹³ Illustrated by previous Brazilian achievements such as those of the *Pampulha Complex* in Belo Horizonte, 1940, and especially the *Ibirapuera Park* (200 ha park), in Sao Paulo, from 1951 to 2004, in collaboration with landscape architect Roberto Burle Marx, reference maybe more relevant than Brasilia in respect with the WFC in Tripoli.

phase would be barred, the state of the premises would correspond to the beginning of a subsequent history. This in terms of an assumption of a Lebanese emergence.

Currently, it would be a form of random social organization, indeed prescribing modern democratic or republican societies, inventing, through social practices as a basis, a new organization, not inclusive but equivalent leading to new pacts.

But it is precisely not the case with the Karami/Niemeyer space, in a separation by the war between its own time and the next, that would self-assign its own objective, fictional, in relative autonomy from the living conception of the social space-time (in real time in synch with activity). It would be an exogenous component of the emerging Lebanon, in juxtaposition among the details of the whole imaginary landscape of a possible creation in this context. Another configuration of poetry and art in its multiple poietic shifts.

Which finally arises the delayed construction of the architecture, always late against a representative modernity, a setback as counterpoint. So, about the competition of ideas and works at the International Film Festival of Lebanon, all kinds of questions are being superimposed in layers, strata, by our body in motion and active thoughts, including this one:

- Which manifest events of cultural resistance, not a replay of the past but as a new evidence of the body and consciousness in relation with the environment, could be revealed to release the possibility of another conception of our urban ecosystems, our topographies, our paradoxical dynamic topos, our social network, our travels, and the actual disruption of democracy as state, understood not as a disorder of social forms, but under the aegis of lifestyles, self-organized in a different fashion.

Always leave the *vital plasticity* activated with happiness in all enjoyment—Innovating its own algorithms in the indifference of the irreducible “junkspace” of the existing equipment, like everywhere in the world, in the end. According to the architect and thinker Rem Koolhaas, the “*Junkspace*”¹⁴ “(...) seems to be an aberration but it is the essence, what matters (...) the product of the escalator meeting the air conditioning conceived in a plasterboard incubator (all three not being mentioned in history books).”

PARATAXIS

The limits of the institutional context: legislation, law, as executive and/or symbolic agreements maintained or defeated—which allowed the Karami/Niemeyer project to exist, as far as what has erased the possible route of the coastal railway in Lebanon, and all sorts of likely or impossible arrangements of the apparent disorder of the objects in the general landscape that have been produced continuously on various and disunited modes since the war: does this belong irreducibly to the worldwide *Junkspace*?—Or, is it to innovate against

¹⁴ “*Junkspace*”, Publisher: Quolibet, Paris, 2006, and Payot—Rivages, Paris, 2011, a collection of the of the most fundamental texts of the author: “Bigness or the Problem of Large,” “The Generic City,” and “*Junkspace*” on the theme of the description and understanding of what kind of unitary urban space we are creating worldwide.

“climbing to the extreme”¹⁵, signifiers floating high: ecstasy of beauty or reality, of the mobile or social, of the visible or occurring, of objectivity or banality? This also could be the subject of specific strategies, ironical or shattered, fragments that can find, in such design competition, the event that declares itself as equivalent or otherwise.

PARAPHRASE

No copying nor imitation by way of resumption, parody, pastiche of what exists that would emerge instead from the dull reference to another; but taken literally: misunderstanding the meaning of a new extension of possibilities. Rather development of information on, next, or around a theme, an argument, a chosen situation as a reality to which value should be augmented.

So goes paraphrasing, as a rhetorical plastic gesture, to create, invent, design, rather than the metaphor—if we remain in the generative line of a driving rhetoric figure that could be parataxis. Aligning ideas, projects, and works.

PARA-SITE/PARASITE

In his book “*The Parasite*”¹⁶ Michel Serres outlines among other things that the parasite has the gift of turning “hostility into hospitality”; it also changes an “exterior into an interior”, “altruism into intimacy”— otherness into familiarity. It changes the rules by shaking the established order. Organic, bionic, durable, plastic, fatal (with shape-shifting or adaptive transformation abilities—like a retrovirus). This is in itself the principle of the living, according to biologists today.

The act of setting, shaping, a process that phagocytes limitations (either its own or that of some others), opening to the unlimited changes of state, seeks the manifestation of existence “with unrestrictive limits” that which exists and literally feeds on the no limits, to the better or worse of an annihilation by entropy (of vampires or empires).

PARAGRAPH

From this point of view, as Oscar Niemeyer composed a parataxical landscape of his work, through recurring details (which are not, being architectonic objects at once) in juxtaposition, in themselves endogenously in one circumscribed space or exogenous spaces in relation to one another in various parts of the world, constructs a specific language where parts are juxtaposed each belonging to various codes in a time continuum parataxical in itself of different schemes of duration (where Le Corbusier saw Niemeyer as “baroque”, to

¹⁵ Intended convergence with the axiomatic that Jean Baudrillard already developed in “*Fatal Strategies*”, Publisher: Grasset et Fasquelle, Paris, 1983.

¹⁶ Published in French by Publisher Grasset, Paris, 1980. See also on the same referential basis the article *Parataxis Philo in MBK*, op. cit. p. 1, in <http://www.criticalsecret.com/users/danielguibert/>

challenge him to be “modern”) where cinematic experiences of Godard or Rocha¹⁷, a poetic Ezra Pound, the Fluxus Group, etc. also intervene.

For a *multi-parallel creation* within the Lebanese festival structure, it is one among the formal realities of the current cultural resistance itself.

Paris, the 29th of August, 2014,

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Translation into English by Michel Belisle

¹⁷ In “*Moderno, Pos-Moderno*”, op. cit. p. 104.