

In · Body · Ed: The Essay as Installation

by

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A Dissertation

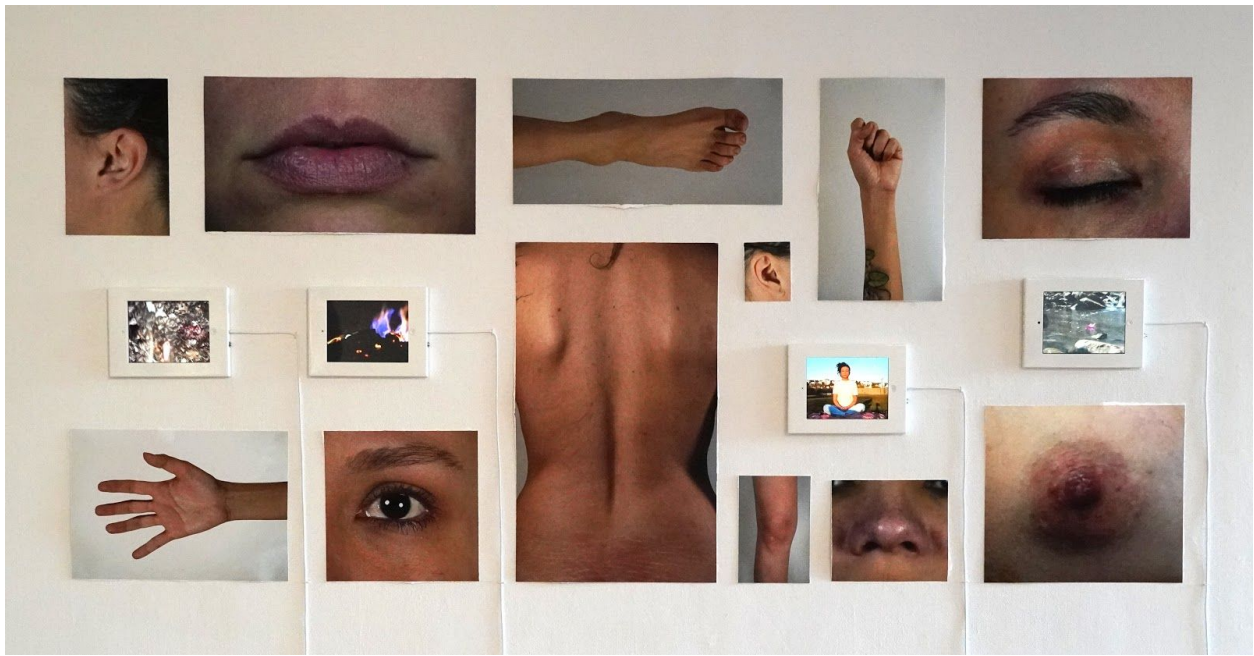
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Abstract

This article aims to discuss the *In·Body·Ed* installation completed for the Media Arts & Culture master's degree final thesis show at SUNY Purchase College. The opening of the exhibition was scheduled for May 11, 2020, the same day that the university announced the social distance measures and suspended its face-to-face activities due to Covid-19. The project title carries a double and convergent meaning. It refers to the word embodied, that is, "to give tangible or visible form to an idea, quality or feeling," as well as "in-person" or "in body" education, reflecting the theme of my work that touches my two years of study, employment and housing at a university in a foreign country. Having dedicated myself to the research of the essay form as part of my master's degree, the conception of the installation was inspired by my considerations on the article *Translating the Essay into Film and Installation* by Nora M. Alter (2007), which I will discuss here. However, the pandemic that unfolded next brought new connotations to the piece. This article is written in light of this unique moment.

The Essay as Form

When I started my research in the essay form, more specifically, in the essay film, my main interest was in exploring and developing different narrative resources that I could later incorporate into my audiovisual practice. Coming from a trajectory with the documentary film, in a period in which the means of audiovisual production and distribution were becoming increasingly accessible, being able to tell a different "version of the facts" from that of the mainstream media was imperative. However, with the network communication in which "versions of the facts" wildly proliferate, new approaches and strategies of ethical communication are necessary. In my presentation letter for the MFA, I said that I was looking for a "more intimate and poetic perspective." It was only after getting to know the work of director Agnes Varda that I learned that this practice I was looking for already had a name and was called the Essay Film, on which incipient literature has been accumulating.

Laura Rascaroli is the first to publish a complete study on the subject in 2009, with the book *The Personal Camera, Subjective Cinema and The Essay Film*. It was followed by the publication two years later of the book *The Essay Film, From Montaigne, After Marker* by Timothy Corrigan. Later to these two pioneering publications came the collections of Elizabeth Papazian and Caroline Eades *The Essay Film: Dialogue, Politics, Utopia* (2016), and Nora M.

Alter and Timothy Corrigan *Essays on the Essay Film* (2017); another book by Rascaroli *How the Essay Film Thinks* (2017), the book by Alter *The Essay Film After Fact and Fiction* (2018), and *World Cinema and the Essay Film: Transnational Perspectives on a Global Practice* (2019) by Brenda Hollweg and Igor Krstic.

Although I will not delve into this bibliography in this article, reading these works was of great importance in the constant transformation and gestation of In·Body·Ed. Another aspect that aroused my interest during the research, is the context and origin of the epistemological considerations that lead Montaigne to coin the term *Essais*. My initial assumption that through the study of the essay film I could better understand processes and transformations in the narrative and paradigmatic elaboration, in order to develop more effective forms of communication in my own work, was gradually gaining body and meaning as far as I could start drawing parallels between Montaigne's propositions and contemporary challenges related to the war of narratives and the "post-truth" debate.

The French Renaissance philosopher Michel de Montaigne was the first to use the concept to define his work, which he describes as "attempts" to put his thoughts in written form. His work *Essais* was first published in 1580. His work is known for the fusion of casual anecdotes, autobiography, and intellectual insight. His famous saying, "Que sais-Je?" (What do I know?) is an expression of the spirit of skepticism and free questioning that started to flourish in that period. His philosophy and attitude towards knowledge are in line with the genre popularized by him, insofar as the open form, difficult to classify, contributed to the great fertility, experimentation, and freedom provided by the essay. Montaigne advocated this playful and unpretentious approach to knowledge, breaking with the tradition that precedes the separation between rationalism and empiricism, guided in part by the division of body and mind.

In other words, Montaigne was critical of the totalizing grand narratives of modernity, in which progress and science would constitute a single path towards the prosperity of humanity. If it makes any sense to return to the propositions made by the author five centuries ago (and which are commonplace for much of the philosophy and thought that unfolded after him), in the specific case I want to point out here, it is mainly due to one of the assumptions that take him to the formulation of the essay. For the philosopher, the project of modernity overestimated human reason; he says that "our life consists partly in madness, partly in wisdom." If today it may seem clear that such a project is not possible not only concerning this ideal (of man, white, European) but also because of the limits of progress itself placed by the finitude of natural resources and

the impact of human activity on the planet, his assertions remain relevant if we want to understand how they have developed since then and how they operate in the current context.

I will take the liberty here to equate the construction of narratives with the essay. Although the essay is generally associated with an intellectual tradition, some of the characteristics that define it as the "collage," freedom of association between ideas, and non-zeal for "truthfulness," seem to have become the very way of thinking in the post-internet era. It is not new that these narratives that move between the factual and the fictitious have reoccupied the socio-political space once and for all, with the right to attempt against the secularity of states and to promote governments with a populist tendency. In Alter's article, she suggests that "if in art the audio-visual essay emerges from an attempt to fuse the genre of the documentary with avant-garde or experimental film, in cinema the audio-visual essay develops from the attempt to combine the documentary and the fictional or feature film genres" (ALTER, 2007, p. 52). However, because they are based strictly on works that are part of an intellectual and artistic tradition, these authors fail to analyze other possible developments or applications arising from this way of operating knowledge.

I propose here an understanding of the resources available to the essay to think of it as an instrument of critical evaluation within the atomized individual. In Alter's article, she discusses the placement of the essay by different authors of German tradition. For Adorno, the essay is "the critical form par excellence; as immanent critique of intellectual constructions, as a confrontation of what they are with their concept, it is critique of ideology" (ALTER, 2007, p. 48). In this way, the essay practice allows the subject to face knowledge to test their inclinations and assertions, their own way of thinking. It is an attempt to bring up the question of "agency" together with knowledge, as Alter points out:

"'To essay' means 'to assay,' 'to weigh,' as well as 'to attempt,' suggesting an open-ended, evaluative search. But this objective search is haunted and constrained by the presence of individual subjectivity. This makes sense if we consider that the verb is also linked via the Latin *ex-agere* to *agens*, the word and problem of human agency." (ALTER, 2007, p. 45)

While Lukács highlights the essay as a critic in the form of art, Adorno insists on its positioning between art and science. However, both agree with the fragmentary, wandering, and flippant characteristic of the genre. The same reason why the essay was first dismissed by a

tradition of German thinkers, "with claims that it possessed neither the sustained deep thought typically found in philosophy, nor the creative impulse that characterized literature" (ALTER, 2007, p. 46), is what makes it a potential medium to explore different contemporary narrative and imaginary constructions. As Adorno points out, the essay "does not seek to find absolute truths – as would, for instance, the documentary genre – but rather 'finds its unity in and through breaks and not by glossing them over.' (...) Adorno goes so far as to propose that it is precisely in its untruths that the reality of the essay lies" (ALTER, 2007, p. 47). It is these characteristics that I believe can contribute to reveal subjective plots that would otherwise not be revealed or problematized.

In *The Essay as Conformism? Some Notes on Global Image Economies* (2011), the German artist Hito Steyerl criticizes the modes of production and circulation of images and their relationship with the essay. She questions whether the essay has lost its critical potential, acting as a "copy and paste" ideology for new global production chains. For the author, the production system itself would have become essayistic and vice versa, "forced mobility, widespread freelancing, and commission-oriented authorship turn essays into monads (...), which reflect their own fragmented and dispersed conditions of production" (STEYERL, 2011, p. 277). Its "compulsory manufacturing of difference, custom-tailored niche markets and flexible and modular forms of production" (p. 277), would point to the symbiosis of the capitalist mode of production and that of the essay. In this article, I propose to extend this parallel to the cognitive, discursive, and paradigmatic processes operating in the "information society."

In this sense, I am especially interested in the precursor considerations of the German artist Hans Richter about the essay film. For him, the essay film would constitute "a new genre of film that would enable the filmmaker to make 'problems, thoughts, even ideas' perceptible – a type of filmmaking that would 'render visible what is not visible'" (ALTER, 2007, p. 50). About this, Alter continues: "unlike the genre of documentary film, which presents facts and information, the essay film is an in-between genre that, insofar as it is not grounded in reality but can be contradictory, irrational, playful and fantastic, is thus well suited to develop complex thought" (p. 50). In this respect, it is necessary to observe a more or less informal difference in the understanding that is commonly made today about essay film and video essay. On the internet, the so-called video essay is generally closer to the use of the term in the daily activities of English-speaking schools and universities: an overview or criticism about a certain theme, work, or author. However, the aspects that I seek to highlight here are linked to the French and German traditions on the subject.

In Laura Rascaroli's book, she will say that one of the defining characteristics of the essay film would be the possibility of saying "me." For the author, "the possibility of making a cinema less conditioned by traditional forms of meaning and by industrial systems of financing and production has obvious political implications. Saying "I" or "we" is, first, a gesture of responsibility and accountability" (RASCAROLI, 2017, p. 5). Alter will draw attention to its interdisciplinary and transnational aspects, "many of the genre's practitioners move between cultures, negotiating multiple identities and subject positions. (...) The essay film provides filmmakers with a way to escape the symbolic circuits inherent in their national cultures and connect with a broader social and political world" (ALTER, 2018, p. 6). Rascaroli also highlights the way to engage the viewer in the construction of the film:

"While these films, indeed, do not belong to a genre as we might normally think of it, they nevertheless share a number of distinguishing features. Metalinguistic, autobiographical and reflective, they all posit a well-defined, extra-textual authorial figure as their point of origin and of constant reference; they strongly articulate a subjective, personal point of view; and they set up a particular communicative structure, largely based, as I will argue, on the address to the spectator, or interpellation" (RASCAROLI, 2009, p. 3).

Thinking of this extra-textual authorial figure as a point of origin and at the same time reflecting the pitfalls of "neoliberal subjectivities" pointed out by Steyerl, I started thinking how to represent my experience without accentuating the differences, without elaborating a narrative that delimits the interpretation of an experience that even in the first person cannot be interpreted by one single perspective. The project, originally conceived as a video, was gradually transformed into an installation, in order to abandon its narrative unit and expose its fragmentation, in addition to abandoning its individuality to invite the viewer to merge with the experience.

The Essay as Installation: **In.Body.Ed**

In the article by Nora M. Alter in which she discusses the genealogy of the essay, going through its one-dimensional literary origin, its two-dimensional audiovisual adaptation, until it reaches the form of "a three-dimensional installation designed as a space through which the spectator actively navigates his or her way" (ALTER, 2007, p. 45), she will emphasize that "the site in

which this new medium is the most innovative is the gallery or museum, where the audiovisual essay has increasingly taken the form of the projected image installation" (p. 53). To make her analysis, she will mainly talk about the work of the German filmmaker Harun Farocki, who on different occasions designed his work in galleries and museums in the form of multiple screens to generate what he calls a "soft montage," according to which images interact more through a "general relatedness, rather than a strict opposition or equation" (p. 53). Alter notes that "Farocki's two-channel installations open spaces for thought, interpretation and reflection, demanding new modes of reception. The associations constructed by the viewer thereby form a historical narrative, actively assembled by the viewer" (p. 54).

Inspired by this possibility of including the experience of the viewer in the composition of the work, as well as that of reflecting in its conception its disjunctive character, since the many records of the experience that I sought to approach are hardly connected in a coherent or unequivocal way, that I chose in my work for extrapolating the "juxtaposition" of screens or projections, to explore how different mediums can combine to compose a narrative experience, observing the potential new meanings that can be generated from the interaction between them. As a way of thinking, which I will address in the next section of this article, the proposal also reflects everyday experience and the ways in which we access knowledge, which includes a variety of sources and formats. Recalling that the essay emerges as a critique of the Enlightenment objectivist ideology, the work explores not only the non-specificity of the medium, but also seeks to encompass the senses, as it proposes at the same time narrative and immersive, as this non-separation between rationalism and empiricism presupposes. Furthermore, as Alter points out in Adorno's work, the essay "'does not progress in a single direction.' Instead, the moments of thought are 'interwoven as in a carpet'; their fruitfulness 'depends on the density of the texture. The thinker does not actually think but rather makes himself into an arena for intellectual experience without unraveling it'" (ALTER, 2007, p. 47).

In·Body·Ed is an installation that plays with the relationship between the senses and the elements, with static and moving image, fragmentation and unity. The work conveys my two years in the MFA program. The essay-installation was composed of printed photographs of parts of my body interspersed with four screens containing clips in an infinite loop. In the first one, we can observe and listen to my bare feet walking on dry leaves, in the second the image and sound of fire being fed by paper, in the third I meditate during sunset at the sound of the wind, in the fourth clip colorful paper boats stroll by a small stream of water accompanied by the sound of the waters. The experience is immersive as when one approaches each of the moving

images they are embraced by the body parts, skin textures, and the sounds specific to each of the clips. The sound element is what connects the work, in that when it passes through it, the sound of walking on dry leaves mixes with that of fire, fire mixes with the wind, the wind mixes with the water. Each of the possible sound combinations transports the viewer to different imaginary and sensory associations.

The work temporarily suspends human and environmental separation, inasmuch as the static images of the body fragments distributed by the wall depend on the moving elements of nature to gain rhythm and compose their unity. The notion of a detached individual who moves through a static environment, submissive to their interests, is undone. Each isolated part of the body and the senses only gains meaning in its interaction with the images composed of sound and movement, time and space. The printed images of the body, would become innocuous and unhistorical if it were not for its encounter with nature, which in this case does not surround the body, but contains it. The work reverses the daily experience of a whole body in the face of a nature perceived as isolated or fragmentary. The human is no longer the capturing center of reality, but is captured by it.

By giving away the narrative linearity to communicate my experience, I created a visual and sensory record capable of sharing and teleporting myself to that time and space, not only through the reading I could make at a given point about the experience lived during those two years. Considering that the narratives and feelings changed through that time and that they will possibly continue to transmute after it, I tried to radicalize the essay's proposal of not providing answers, not closing questions, but leaving them open to the other's input, even though this other is a future self. In this sense, I was inspired by the idea of living memory, in movement, a record that serves not to be enclosed in a souvenir box, book, or museum, but as a device for accessing and sharing stories, a basis under which different oralities can be exercised.

The essay as installation has great potential in this regard. My investigation is motivated by the suspicion that much of the polarization, not only in the socio-political sphere but also in the intimate realm, is partly motivated by the virtualization of the experience with the other and of public life. In Alter's article, she points to the ability of the essay genre to problematize binary categories of representation, since both in its literary and filmic means, it maintains this quality of "betweenness," whether between literature and philosophy in its written form, and between fiction and documentary in the case of audiovisual essays (ALTER, 2007, p. 45). It is in seeking to escape this duality that the idea of articulation becomes important here. In the case of In·Body·Ed it is the environment that articulates and gives meaning to the body. More broadly, in

the case of the essay, it is the articulation of ideas that animates a greater body of understanding. The essay as installation allows articulating different resources to compose a narrative. In the same way that our understanding of the world is composed of different sources of information and experience, the non-specificity of the medium in articulating a message through the essay-installation reflects this condition. The objective here, as Alter proposes, is to "challenge the manner in which history is usually assembled and narrated and enable other stories to unfold" (p. 48).

Nora M. Alter justifies the reading of the work *Eye Machine* by Farocki as an essay installation through Walter Benjamin's notion of "translatability." According to the author:

"'Translatability', Benjamin observes, 'is an essential quality of certain works', by which he means that 'a specific significance inherent in the original' can be put into the words of a different language (p. 71). This 'specific significance' is related to 'pure language', or to the theoretical or philosophical core of what is to be translated. At best, the new translated text becomes an 'echo of the original'; the reverberations that come to make up the new alien form are necessarily distortions. Although Benjamin refers exclusively to written texts, he does not exclude the possibility of translation from one medium into another." (ALTER, 2007, p. 54)

However, my proposition is that an installation becomes essayistic insofar as it is able to articulate different elements in the composition of an idea or narrative, thus generating new meanings from the interaction between them. For Adorno, "in both 'discrete elements set off against one another are brought together to form a readable context', and 'crystallize as a configuration through their motion'. Thus the constellations 'form force fields, just as every intellectual structure is necessarily transformed into a force field under the essay's gaze'" (ALTER, 2007, p. 53). Thus, it is the viewer who creates the link, constituting the "joints" of the work as they navigate through it. The work takes place in this interstice.

The essay's ability to escape dualities or simplifications interests me as an artistic, pedagogical, and social practice. As a creative practice, my interest is to explore the combination of different media and devices to compose an idea or message. From a pedagogical perspective, it is to stimulate processes that encourage the elaboration of authentic thinking and narratives. As a social and reflective practice, I am interested in investigating how the way of thinking and producing knowledge of the essay can contribute to disarm speeches

and rescue the power of self-reflection in a society addicted to reproducing ready-made ideas and messages.

Rearticulating the Future

In 2016, the Oxford Dictionary chose Post-Truth as the word of the year, "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief". This "naming" is an important tool for interpreting how networked communication, based on the economy of attention and segmentation of the audience, affects not only political strategies and trends but especially the structures by which we think and feel. In this sense, it is necessary to enter the arena of the imaginary if we want to share perspectives capable of disputing other possible realities.

Different authors have been working in this direction. They are authors who recognize that for some time now, we have exceeded the threshold of sustainability of the ecosystem as we know it. Irreversible changes in the material basis that underpins the current economic model are already underway, and it is necessary to re-imagine the future in these terms if we are to even speak of "a future." What these propositions all have in common is the interpretive and "adaptive" exercise to a shifting "reality." Even what could once be claimed as the most concrete or material "reality" can become fiction as it no longer exists as such. The very categories Fiction and Documentary enshrined in cinema go through this type of paradox or contradiction. Works of fiction can be seen as more real or have a more significant cultural and subjective impact in the reproduction of "reality" or interpretation of the truth; meanwhile, documentary works may arouse greater distrust. That is how I perceive the essay not only as a "third genre," but also closely related to our contemporary way of being. Understanding its characteristics and strengths gives us the possibility not only to navigate the territory of the genre's intellectual and artistic production but to find how to keep an ethical dimension to the social dialogue, when used as an invitation to more actors to articulate their worldviews, revealing its contradictions and potentialities in the process.

Overcoming the current misinformation and negationism that threatens propositions more aligned with the human common good and beyond, involves not only a call to reason and scientificity, but the conjunction of these with narratives capable of mobilizing our subjectivities towards a worldview closer to the needs of life on and of the planet. So far, I have discussed the

essay in its different dimensions and the characteristics or theoretical elaborations that each of them has taken. Starting from the literary tradition, going through the cinema and later the installation (although, in general, we can think that any form of elaborating knowledge in post-industrialization is a form of essay), the pertinence of the focus in its genealogy consists mainly on the ethical and philosophical propositions, at a time when we go through paradigmatic ruptures of dimensions similar to those that led Montaigne to coin the term *Essais* in the past. In this regard, it is essential to think about the potential, or not, of these narratives to articulate in the production of reality, that is, of the lived, concrete, material, and historical experience. As previously stated, I believe that giving back the power of our artistic, intellectual and pedagogical elaborations to influence history, involves not only deconstructing the various narratives produced intentionally to confuse or misleading but, above all, incorporating affective and "binding" elements to the production of knowledge, giving it a symbolic dimension. Otherwise, niche and tailored cultural or academic products would end up, as Steyerl suggests, in the essay as conformism:

"This would imply that the essay as form has transformed its historical role, as described by Theodor W. Adorno in 1958. In the age of the factory, the assembly line and their standards of identity, Adorno assumed that the essay as a marginalized and often dismissed form of narrative would challenge the coerced identity, which was—according to Adorno—the mandatory form of being in the industrial age. But since these conditions have dramatically changed, at least within contemporary cultural industries, the essay as form no longer necessarily meddles with standardized and homogeneous identities. Instead, it runs parallel to the post-Fordist coercion of difference, mobility, extreme flexibilization, and distracted modes of attention, whose ideal subjectivity is hybrid and supple. Its compilation mirrors contemporary global forms of production, which efficiently and effortlessly combine geographically fragmented objects and competing frazzles of labor." (STEYERL, 2011, p. 276)

The daily consumption of social media, as well as the "Uberization" of the economy, expresses well this condition, as we produce and consume different fractions of content articulated according to individual subjectivities. However, what makes this way of operating knowledge potentially harmful is not necessarily the partial misunderstandings that an individual can reach through the fragmented consumption of information processed according to their set

of beliefs and idiosyncrasies. It is, although, the appropriation of this mechanism for the production of new hegemonic subjectivities, with the deliberate intention of deceiving, justifying, and reinforcing certain behaviors or political orientations. An older and more lasting example of this type of construction (in comparison, for instance, with more recent controversies such as Cambridge Analytica), especially in the United States, is the so-called conspiracy theories, with influence on a global scale, and which would be worth a study themselves. It is challenging to know the motivations for producing this type of content, whether they are based on the obstinate belief of its producers or the profitability of this type of formulation. Although the mode of production of this type of "theory" may somehow be reminiscent of that of the essay, by concatenating different pieces of information with glimpses of personal assertions, the distinction between them consists of the contradiction pointed out earlier by Steyerl. The essay in Adorno's postulation aims to decolonize the individualist modernist identity, while contemporary conspiracy, strives to regroup disaggregated postmodern subjectivities in a kind of "super-truth":

"Every essay in it behaved like an autonomous, self-sufficient and well-adapted subject, which could again be networked and coupled with almost anything else. Or to phrase it more decisively: all those essays collected in that book seemed like perfect neoliberal subjectivities. You could drop them in almost any context and they would start fending for themselves, making connections, communicating from scratch. They tried to contain the contradictory, blend the incongruous and sample it seamlessly." (STEYERL, 2011, p. 276)

The absence of the grand narratives formerly linked to the universalist project of modernity is giving way in complex societies to historical and cognitive reductionism that tries to explain everything in different types of "coherent" narratives according to the set of beliefs of those who consume it. Adherence to this type of construction is reinforced by the more ingrained tendency in some individuals to relegate to God, to the invisible hand of the market, or the "New World Order," the state of affairs. The main cause and consequence of this way of understanding the world are that it tends to see history as a monolith, removing its individual agency, denying a whole chain of dialectical causes and consequences that govern the balance of ecosystems humans and non-humans on Earth. In short, attributing to entities, the market, or malicious

agents the cause of all things, hinders understanding and the power of action, further reiterating the inability to imagine other ways of perceiving and being in the world.

Both narrative forms, the essay as otherness or as a plot, has the potential to affect and change reality; however, through radically different perspectives. One is inspired by a type of understanding about the dynamics of power at work in society and tries to intervene in it, while the other denies these dynamics by attributing to specific actors the script or direction of the reality lived or perceived. These two modalities are more extreme versions of the old dichotomy between fiction and documentary. The streaming of series, in turn, one of the contemporary forms of entertainment with greater investment and consumption, once its plot is able to hook the viewer, produces an immersion or escape capable of satisfying and supplanting its own real and immediate experience. The conspiracy, on the other hand, produces a distrust of reality itself, casting its consumer back to a world perceived as fictitious. In this scenario,

“has the essay really lost any ability to play a critical role? No—its critical impact has just shifted to a different level. The question now is: Can the form of the essay also enable connections between people and objects, which go beyond the flexible and efficient conjunctions typical of post-Fordist capitalism? Is its discontinuous and heterogeneous form still capable of providing alternative forms of vision, knowledge and grounds for discussion?” (STEYERL, 2011, p. 278)

In 2020, the pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus precipitates an even greater disruption in the functioning of contemporary societies. This is because the current pandemic intervenes at a time when three structural crises in the relationship between contemporary hegemonic societies and the Earth system are mutually reinforcing: the climatic emergency, the ongoing annihilation of biodiversity, and the collective illness of organisms, intoxicated by the chemical industry. The increasingly overwhelming impacts resulting from the synergy between these three systemic crises will henceforth leave societies, even the richest, even more unequal and more vulnerable, less able, therefore, to recover their previous way of life. It is precisely such partial losses, more and more frequent, of functionality in the relationship between societies and the environment that essentially characterize the ongoing socio-environmental collapse process (MARQUES, 2020). However, in the broader social spectrum, we have not yet been able to create a new "mythology" or symbolic structure that informs the human unconscious and gives it width and perspective. This has been tried in a more or less

"essayistic" way in the last century by environmental, cultural, artistic movements, and by the academy, but there is still a long way to go to incorporate science into our symbolic dimension.

For a long time we believed that technology and democracy would be able to solve all our problems, which the conjunction of the post-truth, with the ecological crisis and conservative governments, comes to challenge. A perspective that is particularly potent in this context is indigenous narratives. These peoples have long warned of the unsustainability of that way of life that turns citizens into consumers and that sees itself separated from nature, which is seen as a "resource" in this type of Manichaeism. The liturgy of these peoples is perhaps the oldest and most authentic form of essay, in which magical and fantastic elements are woven together with their ancestral wisdom and their active perception of the dynamics of life in reverence and communion with nature. Many of the theoretical lines that have been dealing with perspectives and alternatives to the Anthropocene drink directly or indirectly in the knowledge of native peoples. However, it is especially important to return directly to this source, since it is these peoples and ways of life that face the unbridled expansion of capitalism over the territory, protecting forests and rivers. The indigenous Ailton Krenak in his book "Ideas to postpone the end of the world" proposes that:

"Our time is specialized in creating absences: the sense of living in society, the very sense of the experience of life. This generates a great intolerance towards those who are still able to experience the pleasure of being alive, of dancing, of singing. It is full of small constellations of people around the world who dance, sing, make it rain. The type of zombie humanity that we are being asked to integrate does not tolerate so much pleasure, so much enjoyment of life. So, they preach the end of the world as a possibility to make us give up our own dreams. And my provocation about postponing the end of the world is exactly that I can always tell one more story. If we can do this, we will be postponing the end." (KRENAK, 2019, p.13)

Inspired by Ailton's provocations, I think about the essay as a way to re-articulate ways of being in the world. The political and social imaginary no longer allows us to neglect these structural challenges in any of the dimensions that constitute our existential, labor, and imaginative activities. The essay as installation seems to be an especially fruitful strategy in that it allows us to think about articulating ideas, emotions, and materials in the production of other possible worlds.

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