
The inner memory (script)

For a (thorough) look at the representation of (self)foreignness, the images of work and of absence

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Duration: 33 min.

Year: 2002

-Mephistopheles: Cease with your brooding grief to play

That, like a vulture, eats your life away.

I'm not one of the Great;

Still, if through life you'll go with me,

In that case I'll agree

With pleasure to accommodate

You, on the spot belong to you.

I'll be your comrade true

And if to your liking I behave,

I'll be your servant, be your slave!

-Faust: And what in turn am I to do for you?

Am I to write with graver, chisel or pen?

The spoken word dies forthwith in the quill;

Leather and wax remain our masters still.

-Mephistopheles: With one wee drop of blood you sign your name.

Oh, trust me who for many a thousand year

Have chewed this crust of sour taste.

I'd think you'd let yourself be taught.

Associate you with a poet; then, in thought,

You leave the gentleman full sweep,

Upon your honoured head to heap

Each good and noble quality.

Life is short and art is long.

-Faust: Life's wildering whirl be mine, its painfulest enjoyment,

Enamoured hate, and quickening annoyance.

My bosom, of all thirst for knowledge cured,

Shall close itself henceforth against no woe.

Memory and oblivion are mutually bound, both are necessary for the complete occupation of time.

Memory's duty is the duty of the descendants, and has two sides:

remembrance and vigilance, to find in the everyday the shape of the unnameable.

But the official memory needs monuments: it aesthetisises death and horror.

(Voice)

Memory is imperfect, it is selective, forgetful.

Only our bodies, registered passers-by, keep the sour taste of the price of the justest dreams.

The importance of the numbers of the Spanish emigration to some European countries such as Germany, France or Switzerland between 1959 and 1973 is well known. The conjunction of a surplus work force in Spain (and in other countries in the South) and a strong demand for unqualified workers in these countries, immersed in a period of economic growth, together with the abandonment of a restrictive migratory politics and of the so-called autarchy, resulted in an abundant flow of work force destined to Europe.

I have now made this trip to become the subjects of history, against its history of the subjects, to arrest our look at the unpunished and intransitive look of the statues.

Between 1963 and 1966 my mother packed chocolate in a factory near Hamburg, however, she never knew the Baltic. I was born in between continental trips, and learned fast: amnesia of the past, amnesia of the future. Amnesia forced on those past decades.

Between 1970 and 1987 my mother and my father worked for the Deutsche Carbone in Kalbach (Frankfurt) manufacturing pressed coal pieces.

The politics of memory, the political memory: I have made this trip, an experience of memory, to meet the memory of my experience, the anaesthetised memories of those who have forgotten so that I can remember. For an inner look, prior to its words cast on stone.

Interview with Dolores Ruido and Manuel Lopez

–And that, what year was that, mom?

–Ah, I don't remember any longer what year that was. It's been a long time.

–January the eight of 63.

–And you were there until when?

–I was there three years. I came back home because my father died, and spent here three months. And afterwards Fina came back with me.

–At the end, how long were you there for? You (mom) much longer.

–Between the other factory and this one, I had twenty-one years and a half, but they took off the three months that I spent here, which I didn't pay for and which I should have paid for.

–And you, dad, eighteen, more or less?

–I was there from May 70 until 86, November or December, when we came back.

–And then you left again.

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–So then it was too much family, and because of it Miss Pilar (the village teacher) told you to leave, isn't it? But it must have been hard there, to endure all year long until vacation, missing the land and the children. Maria, she was so little.

–Yes.

–To be there, so far away from the children.

–Yes.

–And didn't you ever think of taking us with you over there?

–No. I thought of taking you there. You alone. But it was too much trouble, because one had to – not being able to speak, that makes everything harder.

–But, over there, most of the people who went took their children with them.

–Yes, many people took the children there, the family, but.

–It was just the andalusians, who took their families.

–Only the andalusians?

–The andalusians, those from Madrid, well... as they could.

–Were they grown already?

–They had nothing, so they took them, because they had nothing here in Spain. Not a house, nothing. But we always wanted to come back to our land, so we saved for it.

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–Ah, world, world, how you turn and turn.

–You are the ones who turned and turned. Because it was very hard to leave, but thanks for that, these little ones were able to study.

–That's why we were there. Our interest in it. They were going upwards, and we took away (money) to send over to them, sometimes we sent everything we earned to them, and sometimes we shared it with them.

–There were times when we sent this one up to 700 marcs to Coruña, where were you, in Santiago?

–In Santiago.

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–But did you come back with the retirement or before getting the retirement?

–We received from over there a rent of two hundred thousand or more pesetas every month.

–At the beginning, of course.

–That was a lot of money.

–But then we got regular retirement.

–Then it was less, wasn't it?

–Regular retirement came, and they would send us what was ours, but during that time the money came in very well.

And the factory gives us more than ten thousand pesetas a month (each). She was there for twenty years, and I was there eighteen, and I get more than her.

–Well, if that had been nowadays, it would have been better not to leave, wouldn't it?

–Oh, well, if we weren't getting paid our retirement, it is the same as before, because now we get more than two hundred thousand pesetas every month, but one year you sell the potatoes a little better, and another- last year Sindo sold 34 or 35.000 kilos at 3pts. What is that!

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Workers are deviated from their revolutionary objective. Moreover, their decline as a class has been designed: consumers of products, home owners. For the first time, they have the possibility for their sons and daughters not to face the same tiring and destructive jobs that they faced. Class becomes a place one wants to abandon. And for what reason wouldn't they want to abandon it? Why should they try again, after having swallowed so many defeats?

(Voice)

Even though I dreaded parents' reunions at school, even though later I would resent your internalisation of the firm's paternalism and of the life at the barracks, I have always known who I was, where I came from. It is necessary to have an attentive self-control, to avoid being the object of external control, of pity or charity: get on, don't fall, go by yourself to the doctor, don't get any debts, don't ask for the impossible. And all that fear, and that rage that you have gone through. All that fear still lives inside me. Today, from my work, I think of how to make your work visible: the production of history, the history of production.

How to imagine the factory today? How to represent the black dust, and the quiet, because fatigued, dressing rooms, and the scarcity of words during twenty years?

How to make you understand that we work already when we don't work, that we honor your memory when we withstand precariously? How to make you comprehend that work hasn't made us free? And all the contradictions, and all the difficulties of being the smallest, of being a woman and of not being up to the expectations.

All your efforts were directed at changing our future, and the changed future rose between us like an unsurpassable distance: mother, I will carry with pride the legacy of your little treasures to tell you that which I have never told you.

Interview with Cristina Scheller (Union Secretary of Carbone A.G.)

-How many workers are at the moment in Carbone?

-In total, factory and office workers together, three hundred and twenty-seven.

-How many of them are foreigners?

-There are around one hundred and forty foreigners.

-And, what we were talking about before, right now there is no more hiring.

-Noone is admitted. They have enough people and they don't take anyone in, not even Germans, or foreigners, absolutely noone. They only admit assistants from other companies that hire people temporarily, at vacations.

-What does your work in the factory, as the union representative, consist of? Do you act as an intermediary between the workers and the firm?

-All the problems we have are put on the table, and she resolves them as best she can.

-But is there only one union in the factory?

-She is the union representative, the secretary.

-Of the company's union, but, aren't there any other unions?

-Here, in the factory, there aren't. But in Frankfurt, at headquarters, when there is a reunion, a person from the Metal Union comes to listen to our problems, and if anything can be done, to solve them.

-This firm belongs to the Metal Union?

-Yes. It is part of the Metal Industry.

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It is banal to say that memory is a liar, it is more interesting to see in this lie a form of natural protection that can be governed and modelled.

Tales of the other, of the stranger (foreigner) in me.

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Interview with Ramona Costa, Eugenio Costa, Vito Raimondi and Benito Costa

-Foreigners. You get here, foreigner. The Germans have come, and that hurts, because they treat you like-

-Well, they treat you normally.

-Yes, but it hurts, because they say that word. They don't say family, neighbours. Here come the Germans.

-There is the German.

-And that hurts, because inside, you feel spanish, normal, spanish. And then they come and say that. Foreigner there, foreigner here. You don't have a choice. Like a gypsy. You don't have anything positive.

-Foreigner here, foreigner there. Because there isn't anything else.

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-At the beginning there were more of us Italians, Spaniards, Greek, and also a few Portuguese.

-And Yugoslavs... they don't make any trouble. We were fine in the barracks...

-Those were wonderful times.

-Yes, it was good, very good.

-Because you were better friends with the workers here in the factory, because you lived with them, it was all more together.
-More family-like.
-You had problems and you talked, and you straightened it out, but today, that was cut off, it is less family-like, each is independent.
-Now, each one works for herself.
-Independent, and it is not like before anymore, do you understand? Before, when you were in the barracks, you knew Italians, Spaniards, Greeks, there weren't any Turks.
-One.
-Only one.
-Yes, a woman.
-And very few Portuguese. Back then there were three or four countries, but we understood each other well.
-But all of them European.
-What do I know, you shared what you had like siblings.
-Well, because we lived together, like a family.
-Together.

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-Here, if you don't work, no one gives it to you, do you understand?
-Well, I think that the German state, I speak better Italian, to express myself better, I think that it does a lot for the foreigner, but right now, if there aren't two of you working here in Germany, it is very hard to live. Because, before, thirty years ago, you could live with only one person working, one lived better, but now, there has to be two people working, to pay the house, life here.
-It is expensive.
-It is very expensive... one can live here alone... only the person who comes, I don't know, from Albania, or Russia, where they don't have anything, just like the Albanians go now to Italy. One does not live like one used to.

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-My thought was, we had bought the house... But the house is over there. And we are here, when we go on vacation, we go for one week.
-To clean up.
-...no, to the sea.
-Oh, the sea.
-then, another week and somewhere else. (the house) is just for sleeping a couple of days, it is a bit sad, and you think, you think a lot. But, what can you do?
When I tell my son about leaving for Italy, him, for vacation, but not for staying.

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-Public, yes, but we are very happy. They treat them well. Besides, over here, every two or three months, there is a parents' meeting with the teachers. Because, over here, there is one teacher for math, it is not the same one for all. There is one teacher for biology, one for chemistry, each teacher...

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-Over here in Germany families move around, do you understand? And, in Spain, families, when certain occasions arrive, get together.
-Yes.
-Same in Italy.
-Because I remember when we were children, before coming to Germany, we would all get together at my grandmother's house. My grandmother's was the main house, and we would all be there: uncles and aunts, cousins, nieces... the whole family. We could even be 25 or 30. We would set up the tables and chairs in the farmyard, and there it would just be singing and drinking. And the children would be playing. I remember that, I was just a kid.
It is very different. Look, one thing is to tell you about it, and another thing is to live it, do you understand? And it is not just one year, it is many years. And you accept this over here, and you have to forget about over there little by little, and I would want my son to remember, about over there, what was left behind, do you understand? But it is difficult, because my family is over here, and I don't go over Christmas to Spain, for him to get to know it, because I would break my family's friendship, do you understand? Because over here, we all get together, either at my mother's house or at my house. It is three of us siblings and we are all there, as late as we want. And for New Year's Eve we go to the dance, and we enjoy it over there.
- Until five in the morning.

(Voice)

The official planning of a politics of migration was the provisional. A strategy that, apart from articulating a mechanism of temporal adjustment to the state work market, it favoured the acquisition of foreign currency with which to finance imports. Spanish emigration to Europe (1959-1973). Admitted final numbers: two million workers.
Dear children, double point, just two words to tell you that we are well. The letters with photographs came and went: my first bicycle, the birthdays, the first family vacations, the knitted dresses that you sent me.
I didn't understand then why you insisted on writing in Castilian. The break-up grew with the distance, feeding on our efforts.

We changed in your absence, to the point of becoming complete strangers, but the fiction of progress was almost perfect. We were strangers for you who lived among strangers, those you despised in order to save your little distance of less different among the different.

Today, when I get home, I feel a stranger; I am already a stranger, as a condition, as a debt.

How to retrieve all that absence of the time of the photographs? How to finish with the silence and the TV on at all times so as not to ask? I have lost your words in acquiring other words: I remember your sudden illnesses right before every trip, the little traps and humiliations of the borders, and I start to walk among emigrants who still are.

To receive, not to look for. To wait until the instants come to me, to speak from my body, from the bodies of others, the only one of possible spaces in which to reconstruct the history learned at university, in the monuments.

This is a trip filled with faith, with analogies and chance: more than twenty years ago I was here, and now I return to speak about it, to take those images which fed this memory of oblivion: the factory is smaller than in my memories, the Bergstrasse busier, the Central Station.

I have made this trip because I have the duty of memory, and the necessity to tell our history which is also the History.

The inner memory
by Maria Ruido

Texts:

- Goethe, Johann W.: Faust (1808)
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- Walkerdine, Valerie: "Subject exchanged without prior notice: psychology, postmodernity and the popular" (1996)
- Marker, Chris: Inmemory (1998)
- Kristeva, Julia: Strangers to Ourselves (1988)

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- October, S. Eisenstein (1927)
- No-Do (Spanish Documentary News) (1964)

Music:

- W.A. Mozart: "The magic flute" (1791)
- Anton Ignorant: "The right to copy" (1999)
- Juanito Valderrama: "El emigrante" (1959)

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Thanks to
Deutsche Carbone A.G.
Pieter Dietz
Cristina Scheller
Ute Evers
Anita Breuer
Catuxa Lopez Pato
Chus Pato
Maria Esteiran
Uqui Permui
Ramona Costa
Eugenio Costa
Benito Costa
Manuel López
Dolores Ruido
