

Cross-Temporal Sonatas in Staccato Ostinato

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“Cities were built to measure time, to remove time from nature. There’s an endless counting down, he said. When you strip away all the surfaces, when you see into it, what’s left is terror.”

~ Don DeLillo, *Point Omega*

“O reader, do not ask of me how I
grew faint and frozen then – I cannot write it:
all words would fall far short of what it was.

I did not die, and I was not alive;
think for yourself, if you have any wit,
what I became, deprived of life and death.
The emperor of the despondent kingdom
so towered from the ice, up from midchest,
that I match better with a giant’s breadth
than giants match the measure of his arms...”

~ Dante Alighieri (*Inferno XXXIV, 22-31*)

The sleeping patient is panicked; because he cannot have a nightmare; he cannot wake up
or go to sleep; he has mental indigestion ever since.”

~ Wilfred R. Bion, *Learning from Experience*

This is a tale of Future Anterior in Future Anterior.

Future Anterior is a tense created to deal with the paradox of the a-temporality. A tense allowing to live and to pretend to be living as well as to have biologically lived while simultaneously maintaining the feeling of being dead inside. An invented predicate with the aim to deal simultaneously with the reality but also the impossibility of Thanatos. In other words, not only to listen to the sonatas, but also to become a participant and a spectator of a bleak psychic oratorio.

French Situationist Guy Debord (1956) defines the concept of “*dérive*” as a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances. It is a stroll through the city to understand its psychogeography. From a “*dérive*” point of view, cities have psychogeographical contours, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones. The city represents a special instance of repressed desires. In a “*dérive*” the individual and/or a group of people are engaged in a playful constructive and interpretive behavior during which the city is turned around. The participants see in the city unifying and empowering possibilities in place of the

fragmentation and decay. "The spatial field of a *dérive* may be precisely delimited or vague, depending on whether the goal is to study a terrain or to emotionally disorient oneself," says Debord (1956, p. 178). As far as the temporality is concerned, the average duration of a "*dérive*" is one day, according to Debord, and it is considered "as the time between two periods of sleep. The starting and ending times have no necessary relation to the solar day. But more importantly, a "*dérive*" often takes place within a deliberately limited period of a few hours, or even fortuitously during fairly brief moments; or it may last for several days without interruption" (p.178)

Z's disclosure in the first session that they had a terminal congenital disease, and that they had reached the average life expectancy, shattered the inherent lack of temporality in the analysis, leaving no choice but starting the analysis with Mahler's Adagio, in his Symphony No. 9 in D-major. In lieu of analysis, the process turned into a series of *détournements*, or somewhat "subversive" detours that go counter to the original intent, and "*dérives*." The truth has created its own psychogeography turning every session into an interplay between Eros and Thanatos. Together we organized architectural field trips, pretending to focus on how to enrich the psychic sustainability while, in reality, we ended up focusing compulsively to identify every possible clock tower in the vagueness of the psychic depths with an unconscious desire to beat Chronos in a marathon of "*derives*." Do not start having reveries about the lovely Astronomical Clock in Prague! Instead, all the clock towers discovered during these "*dérives*" had the look of the Zimmer Clock Tower in Lier, Belgium. Mechanical rather than artful; cold rather than warm; a constant reminder of linearity rather than poetically dream inducing; "*strepitoso*" rather than "*soave*"; serving absolutes and precision as if to engineer a refutation against negative capabilities ...

Z and I encountered in our sessions *détournement* of our desires; and possibly our unconscious collective ones too. Formulating my version of *Nepenthe* for Z, the mythical potion that banishes grief, and they formulating their version of *Nepenthe* for me. This way, our sorrows, deriving from the inherent realities of the particular analytic relationship, could be quelled with forgetfulness.

Donald Meltzer expounding his theory of "Aesthetic Conflict" says that:

"The tragic element in the aesthetic experience resides, not in the transience, but in the enigmatic quality of the object. The central experience of pain of the aesthetic conflict resided in uncertainty, tending towards distrust, verging on suspicion. It is the desire to know rather than possess the

object of desire, the K-link, the quest for knowledge. Desire makes it possible, even essential, to give the object its freedom.”

Exiled desires... Desires in exile... Desire-less freedoms of the internal displacement...

Desires being shattered by lack of seduction... Offering absence of seduction as soul murdering...

Perpetuating desires creating timelessness... Not being able to forget... No Nepenthe as an antidote for the acute pain of what is to come, sooner or later...

Dejected individual's desire to exile himself/herself as a détournement. A dérive to find the never achieved encounter elsewhere, in a foreign geography or in the Heimlich of an Unheimlich (Freud's estranged familiar and the uncanny); or may be in the multitude of unexplored temporalities...

How could Z possibly integrate and assimilate the reality of their congenital illness from belonging to the land of inconceivable into the part of her psychic universe known to her? What color, smell, flavor, texture of Winnicottian "I AM" is needed to make that happen? (1968, p. 267)

How could her self's coherence could be maintained if the time becomes a persecutory object? What kind of détournement is needed to provide regulation for such an obliterating instinct?

If Z were to accept time as a Winnicottian "me" part, what would be happening internally? Could temporality be suspended as a defensive maneuver? How would the juxtaposition of the affect and the quality of the elliptical relationship to time sound musically? Ever since Z became aware of her condition, Z must have inhabited, timelessly, in a world of undreamable panic as Bion suggested (1962a, p. 8). Death leaking through the defenses; oozing from psychic membranes. Virtuosity of Thanatos suffusing Z's being with nightmares, night terrors, daymares and dayterrors. Thanatos pushing Z to dwell in a temporality "between nothing and no-thing," as Andre Green described in negative womb (1986, p. 142).

Countertransferentially, I either found myself in a very manic mode denying the-dread-that-could not-be-named or extremely worried and lethargic before and after meeting Z. The time seemed to fly in the sessions. In my recurring reverie, I kept watching Yasujiro Ozu's movie where people were

filmed constantly rushing from somewhere to some other-where in a series of “dérives,” toward Eros, possibly with the desire to capture the timelessness of desire, without realizing, however, being taken with every step instead, to a psychic détournement where Thanatos, the inherent untruth of Eros, resided. And watching this movie constantly, both in and out of the sessions, deprived me of the capacities for reverie. I felt panicky, unable to sleep; unable to wake up...

There must have been no feelings of a “beginning” when all felt to have already begun. It might have felt dwelling in an endless End. What would constitute then the End of a beginning-lessness? Is there something preserved to dig or just nothing to dig to preserve? Had there been a destruction of some sort already or the destruction permeated inherently the whole architecture? Alluding to a passage by Freud, at the beginning of his paper “Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis” (1909, p. 175-176) could Z burying their self be seen as an attempt to be preserved as a defense against the felt reality of time? Preserved and protected from being destroyed timeless times? Could developing capacities as a result of being in analysis have started Z’s real destruction similar to that of Pompeii? Analysis becoming a détournement of analysis.

The encounters with Z have been a series of silent sonatas composed in a-temporal temporality in staccato ostinato, each note persistently detached from the previous or next, until the day when I have been informed by her passing. I could still feel my eyes’ frantic movements to locate the clock tower and Yasujiro Ozu’s movie slow-motioning to a complete stop. I could still remember unquantifiable self-parts of mine desperately asking for a détournement to take place. Wishing for another “dérive” with the desire to repair the diptych broken at the hinge. Making the thing that happened simply “unerasable” thus, negating in a Freudian sense (what would mean negation of negation analytically?), Shelley’s “unerasing waves” emphasizing the fleeting quality of time.

Within the surface of the fleeting river
The wrinkled image of the city lay
Immovably unquiet, and forever
It trembles, but it never fades away
~ Shelley, *Evening: Ponte al Mare, Pisa*

As Shelley’s “wrinkled image”, Z’s absent presence, still, “lay immovably unquiet” in the trembling depths of my unconscious, until perhaps, if and when, I decide to wake up and start dreaming and

falling asleep again in the times of other temporalities, allowing the plangent sonata in “staccato ostinato” which Z and I composed together to be transformed eventually into a “legato” in time, starting softly “pianissimo” and gradually “allargando” becoming less “ostinato” and less “staccato” with each and every musically expressed temporal articulation of the mourning process.

Developing capacities, finally, to let go of the shackling desire; the desire to steal the Chronosphere like Alice did with the intention of traveling back in time to stop Jabberwocky killing the Mad Hatter’s family. Coming to terms with the indescribable ambiguity that the feeling of simultaneous existence of Eros and Thanatos creates; forgiving, perhaps, “Time” and realizing that it is nothing but an illusionary contour to set stage for the macabre dance whose madness, if not contained, would become the force that Bion talks about: the force that continues to feeding on itself after having destroyed the existence, time and space. (1965, p. 101)

Where does its denuding, cannibalistic hunger then come from? Mike Eigen (2014, personal communication) has an idea which he poetically expresses while remaining both courageous and curious:

“After life is destroyed, it (the force) will continue to feed on death, nonexistence after nonexistence. Surely such a force cannot be real – its existence is a contradiction in terms. But it is precisely this impossibility that gives it power” (2004, p. 62)

Which key the composer, I wonder, would choose if he/she were to compose a sonata for the nonexistence Eigen intimates?

At the impossibility of destroying of or constructing a person “in absentia”. That is where I felt being abandoned at... Brief encounter with Z left me in the wide world web of “indeterminateness”, the same place where they were left when they had a beginning-less End. In cross-temporal geographies with no available “dérives” at disposal for more psychic détournements taking place.

Lieutenant L., Freud reports, enquired as to whether there was any guarantee of what one’s attitude would be towards what was discovered. What would Z’s attitude be?

Similar to Dante’s mise-en-scene, Z did not die and they were not alive. Z dwelled in psychic no-wheres deprived of both life and death. Could you, the reader, intimate what Z has become? Maybe Shakespeare decided to cast her as Hermione in Winter’s Tale.

Staccato, Italian for detached, is a form of musical articulation. In modern notation, it signifies a note of “shortened duration”, separated from the note that may follow by “silence”.

Ostinato, Italian for obstinate, is music refers to short melodic phrase repeated throughout a composition. A rhythmic ostinato is a “short” constantly repeated rhythmic pattern.

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