

INTRODUCTION:  
AN APARTMENT ON URANUS

As the years passed, I learned to think of dreams as an integral part of life. There are dreams that, because of their sensory intensity, their realism or precisely their lack of realism, deserve to be introduced into autobiography, just as much as events that were actually lived through. Life begins and ends in the unconscious; the actions we carry out while fully lucid are only little islands in an archipelago of dreams. No existence can be completely rendered in its happiness or its madness without taking into account oneiric experiences. It's Calderón de la Barca's maxim reversed: it's not a matter of thinking that life is a dream, but rather of realizing that dreams are also a form of life. It is just as strange to think, like the Egyptians, that dreams are cosmic channels through which the souls of ancestors pass in order to communicate with us, as to claim, as some of the neurosciences do, that dreams are a 'cut-and-paste' of elements experienced by the brain during waking life, elements that return in the dream's REM phase, while our eyes move beneath our eyelids, as if they were watching. Closed and sleeping, eyes continue to see. Therefore, it is more appropriate to say that the human psyche never stops creating and dealing with reality, sometimes in dreams, sometimes in waking life.

Whereas over the course of the last few months my waking life has been, to use the euphemistic Catalan expression, 'good, so long as we don't go into details,' my oneiric life has had the power of a novel by Ursula K. Le Guin. During one of my recent dreams, I was talking with the artist Dominique González-Foerster about my problem of geographic dislocation: after years of

a nomadic life, it is hard for me to decide on a place to live in the world. While we were having this conversation, we were watching the planets spin slowly in their orbits, as if we were two giant children and the solar system were a Calder mobile. I was explaining to her that, for now, in order to avoid the conflict that the decision entailed, I had rented an apartment on each planet, but that I didn't spend more than a month on any one of them, and that this situation was economically and physically unsustainable. Probably because she is the creator of the *Exotourism* project, Dominique in this dream was an expert on extra-terrestrial real-estate management. 'If I were you, I'd have an apartment on Mars and I'd keep a *piel-à-terre* on Saturn,' she was saying, showing a great deal of pragmatism, 'but I'd get rid of the Uranus apartment. It's much too far away.'

Awake, I don't know much about astronomy; I don't have the slightest idea of the positions or distances of the different planets in the solar system. But I consulted the Wikipedia page on Uranus: it is in fact one of the most distant planets from Earth. Only Neptune, Pluto and the dwarf planets Haumea, Makemake and Eris are further away. I read that Uranus was the first planet discovered with the help of a telescope, eight years before the French Revolution. With the help of a lens he himself had made, the astronomer and musician William Herschel observed it one night in March in a clear sky, from the garden of his house at 19 New King Street, in the city of Bath. Since he didn't yet know if it was a huge star or a tailless comet, they say that Herschel called it 'Georgium Sidus', the Georgian Star, to console King George III for the loss of the British colonies in America: England had lost a continent, but the King had gained a planet. Thanks to Uranus, Herschel was

able to live on a generous royal pension of two hundred pounds a year. Because of Uranus, he abandoned both music and the city of Bath, where he was a chapel organist and Director of Public Concerts, and settled in Windsor so that the King could be sure of his new conquest by observing it through a telescope. Because of Uranus, they say, Herschel went mad, and spent the rest of his life building the largest telescope of the eighteenth century, which the English called 'the monster'. Because of Uranus, they say, Herschel never played the oboe again. He died at the age of eighty-four: the number of years it takes for Uranus to go around the sun. They say that the tube of his telescope was so wide that the family used it as a dining hall at his funeral.

Uranus is what astrophysicists call a 'gas giant'. Made up of ice, methane and ammonia, it is the coldest planet in the solar system, with winds that can exceed 900 kilometres per hour. In short, the living conditions are not especially suitable. So Dominique was right: I should leave the Uranus apartment.

But dream functions like a virus. From that night forward, while I'm awake, the sensation of having an apartment on Uranus increases, and I am more and more convinced that the place I should live is over there.

For the Greeks, as for me in this dream, Uranus was the solid roof of the world, the limit of the celestial vault. Uranus was regarded as the house of the gods in many Greek invocation rituals. In mythology, Uranus is the son that Gaia, the Earth, conceived alone, without insemination or coition. Greek mythology is at once a kind of retro sci-fi story anticipating in a *do-it-yourself* way the technologies of reproduction and bodily transformation that will appear throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; and at the same time a kitschy TV

series in which the characters give themselves over to an unimaginable number of relationships outside the law. Thus Gaia married her son Uranus, a Titan often represented in the middle of a cloud of stars, like a sort of Tom of Finland dancing with other muscle-bound guys in a techno club on Mount Olympus. From the incestuous and ultimately not very heterosexual relationships between heaven and earth, the first generation of Titans were born, including Oceanus (Water), Chronos (Time), and Memosyne (Memory)... Uranus was both the son of the Earth and the father of all the others. We don't quite know what Uranus's problem was, but the truth is that he was not a good father: either he forced his children to remain in Gaia's womb, or he threw them into Tartarus as soon as they were born. So Gaia conceived one of her children to carry out a contraceptive operation. You can see in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence the representation that Giorgio Vasari made in the sixteenth century of Chronos castrating his father Uranus with a scythe. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, emerged from Uranus's amputated genital organs... which could imply that love comes from the disjunction of the body's genital organs, from the displacement and externalization of genital force.

This form of non-heterosexual conception, cited in Plato's *Symposium*, was the inspiration for the German lawyer Karl Heinrich Ulrichs to come up with the word 'Uranian' [*Uring*] in 1864 to designate what he called relations of the 'third sex'. In order to explain men's attraction to other men, Ulrichs, after Plato, cut subjectivity in half, separated the soul from the body, and imagined a combination of souls and bodies that authorized him to reclaim dignity for those who loved against the law. The segmentation of soul and body reproduces

in the domain of experience the binary epistemology of sexual difference: there are only two options. Uranians are not, Ulrichs writes, sick or criminal, but feminine souls enclosed in masculine bodies attracted to masculine souls.

This is not a bad idea to legitimize a form of love that, at the time, could get you hanged in England or in Prussia, and that, today, remains illegal in seventy-four countries and is subject to the death penalty in thirteen countries, including Nigeria, Pakistan, Iran, and Qatar; a form of love that constitutes a common motive for violence in family, society and police in most Western democracies.

Ulrichs does not make this statement as a lawyer or scientist: he is speaking in the first person. He does not say 'there are Uranians', but 'I am a Uranian'. He asserts this, in Latin, on 28 August 1867, after having been condemned to prison and after his books have been banned and he speaks in front of an assembly of 500 jurists, members of the German Parliament, and a Bavarian prince – an ideal audience for such confessions. Until then, Ulrichs had hidden behind the pseudonym 'Numa Numantius'. But from that day on, he speaks in his own name, he dares to taint the name of his father. In his diary, Ulrichs confesses he was terrified, and that, just before walking onto the stage of the Grand Hall of the Odeon Theatre in Munich, he had been thinking about running away, never to return. But he says he suddenly remembered the words of the Swiss writer Heinrich Hössli who, a few years before, had defended sodomites (though not, however, speaking in his own name): 'Two ways lie before me,' Hössli wrote, 'to write this book and expose myself to persecution, or not to write it and be full of guilt until the day I am buried. Of course I have

encountered the temptation to stop writing... But before my eyes appeared the images of the persecuted and the prospect of such wretched children who have not yet been born, and I thought of the unhappy mothers at their cradles, rocking their cursed yet innocent children! And then I saw our judges with their eyes blindfolded. Finally, I imagined my gravedigger slipping the cover of my coffin over my cold face. Then, before I submitted, the imperious desire to stand up and defend the oppressed truth possessed me... And so I continued to write with my eyes resolutely averted from those who have worked for my destruction. I do not have to choose between remaining silent or speaking. I say to myself: speak or be judged!

Ulrichs writes in his journal that the judges and Parliamentarians seated in Munich's Odeon Hall cried out, as they listened to his speech, like an angry crowd: End the meeting! End the meeting! But he also notes that one or two voices were raised to say: Let him continue! In the midst of a chaotic tumult, the President left the theatre, but some Parliamentarians remained. Ulrichs's voice trembled. They listened.

But what does it mean to speak for those who have been refused access to reason and knowledge, for us who have been regarded as mentally ill? With what voice can we speak? Can the jaguar or the cyborg lend us their voices? To speak is to invent the language of the crossing, to project one's voice into an interstellar expedition: to translate our difference into the language of the norm; while we continue, in secret, to practise a strange lingo that the law does not understand.

So Ulrichs was the first European citizen to declare publicly that he wanted to have an apartment on Uranus. He was the first mentally ill person, the first sexual

criminal to stand up and denounce the categories that labelled him as sexually and criminally diseased. He did not say, 'I am not a sodomite.' On the contrary, he defended the right to practise sodomy between men, calling for a reorganization of the systems of signs, for a change of the political rituals that defined the social recognition of a body as healthy or sick, normal or criminal. He invented a new language and a new scene of enunciation. In each of Ulrichs's words addressed from Uranus to the Munich jurists resounds the violence generated by the dualist epistemology of the West. The entire universe cut in half and solely in half. Everything is heads or tails in this system of knowledge. We are human or animal. Man or woman. Living or dead. We are the colonizer or the colonized. Living organism or machine. We have been divided by the norm. Cut in half and forced to remain on one side or the other of the rift. What we call 'subjectivity' is only the scar that, over the multiplicity of all that we could have been, covers the wound of this fracture. It is over this scar that property, family and inheritance were founded. Over this scar, names are written and sexual identities asserted.

On 6 May 1868, Karl Maria Kerbeny, an activist and defender of the rights of sexual minorities, sent a handwritten letter to Ulrichs in which for the first time he used the word 'homosexual' to refer to what his friend called 'Uranians'. Against the anti-sodomy law promulgated in Prussia, Kerbeny defended the idea that sexual practices between people of the same sex were as 'natural' as the practices of those he calls – also for the first time – 'heterosexuals'. For Kerbeny, homosexuality and heterosexuality were just two natural ways of loving. For medical jurisprudence at the end of the nineteenth century, however, homosexuality would be

reclassified as a disease, a deviation, and a crime.

I am not speaking of history here. I am speaking to you of your lives, of mine, of today. While the notion of Uranianism has gone somewhat astray in the archives of literature, Kerbeny's concepts would become authentic biopolitical techniques of dealing with sexuality and reproduction over the course of the twentieth century, to such an extent that most of you continue to use them to refer to your own identity, as if they were descriptive categories. Homosexuality would remain listed until 1975 in Western psychiatric manuals as a psychosexual disease. This remains a central notion, not only in the discourse of clinical psychology, but also in the political languages of Western democracies.

When the notion of homosexuality disappeared from psychiatric manuals, the notions of intersexuality and transsexuality appear as new pathologies for which medicine, pharmacology and law suggest remedies. Each body born in a hospital in the West is examined and subjected to the protocols of evaluation of gender normality invented in the 1950s in the United States by Drs John Money and Joan Hampson: if the baby's body does not comply with the visual criteria of sexual difference, it will be submitted to a battery of operations of 'sexual reassignment'. In the same way, with a few minor exceptions, neither scientific discourse nor the law in most Western democracies recognize the possibility of inscribing a body as a member of human society unless it is assigned either masculine or feminine gender. Transsexuality and intersexuality are described as psychosomatic pathologies, and not as the symptoms of the inadequacy of the politico-visual system of sexual differentiation when faced with the complexity of life.

How can you, how can we, organize an entire system

of visibility, representation, right of self-determination and political recognition if we follow such categories? Do you really believe that you are male or female, that we are homosexual or heterosexual, intersex or trans? Do these distinctions worry you? Do you trust them? Does the very meaning of your human identity depend on them? If you feel your throat constricting when you hear one of these words, do not silence it. It's the multiplicity of the cosmos that is trying to pierce through your chest, as if your throat were the tube of a Herschel telescope.

Let me tell you that homosexuality and heterosexuality do not exist outside of a dualistic, hierarchical epistemology that aims at preserving the domination of the paterfamilias over the reproduction of life. Homosexuality and heterosexuality, intersexuality and transsexuality do not exist outside of a colonial, capitalist epistemology, which privileges the sexual practices of reproduction as a strategy for managing the population and the reproduction of labour, but also the reproduction of the population of consumers. It is capital, not life, that is being reproduced. These categories are the map imposed by authority, not the territory of life. But if homosexuality and heterosexuality, intersexuality and transsexuality, do not exist, then who are we? How do we love? Imagine it.

Then, I remember my dream and I understand that my trans condition is a new form of Uranism. I am not a man I am not a woman I am not heterosexual I am not homosexual I am not bisexual. I am a dissident of the sex-gender system. I am the multiplicity of the cosmos trapped in a binary political and epistemological system, shouting in front of you. I am a Uranian confined inside the limits of techno-scientific capitalism.

Like Ulrichs, I am bringing no news from the margins; instead, I bring you a piece of horizon. I come with news of Uranus, which is neither the realm of God nor the sewer. Quite the contrary. I was assigned a female sex at birth. They said I was lesbian. I decided to self-administer regular doses of testosterone. I never thought I was a man. I never thought I was a woman. I was several. I didn't think of myself as transsexual. I wanted to experiment with testosterone. I love its viscosity, the unpredictability of the changes it causes, the intensity of the emotions it provokes forty-eight hours after taking it. And, if the injections are regular, its ability to undo your identity, to make organic layers of the body emerge that otherwise would have remained invisible. Here as everywhere, what matters is the measure: the dosage, the rhythm of injections, the order of them, the cadence. I wanted to become unrecognizable. I wasn't asking medical institutions for testosterone as hormone therapy to cure 'gender dysphoria'. I wanted to function with testosterone, to experience the intensity of my desire through it, to multiply my faces by metamorphosing my subjectivity, creating a body that was a revolutionary machine. I undid the mask of femininity that society had plastered onto my face until my identity documents became ridiculous, obsolete. Then, with no way out, I agreed to identify myself as a transsexual, as a 'mentally ill person', so that the medico-legal system would acknowledge me as a living human body. I paid with my body for the name I bear.

By making the decision to construct my subjectivity with testosterone, the way the shaman constructs his with plants, I take on the negativity of my time, a negativity I am forced to represent and against which I can fight only from this paradoxical incarnation, which is

to be a trans man in the twenty-first century, a feminist bearing the name of a man in the #MeToo movement, an atheist of the hetero-patriarchal system turned into a consumer of the pharmacopornographic industry. My existence as a trans man constitutes at once the acme of the sexual *ancien régime* and the beginning of its collapse, the climax of its normative progression and the signal of a proliferation still to come.

I have come to talk to you – to you and to the dead, or rather, to those who live as if they were already dead – but I have come especially to talk to the cursed, innocent children who are yet to be born. Uranians are the survivors of a systematic, political attempt at infanticide: we have survived the attempt to kill in us, while we were not yet adults, and while we could not defend ourselves, the radical multiplicity of life and the desire to change the names of all things. Are you dead? Will they be born tomorrow? I congratulate you, belatedly or in advance.

I bring you news of the crossing, which is the realm of neither God nor the sewer. Quite the contrary. Do not be afraid, do not be excited, I have not come to explain anything morbid. I have not come to tell you what a transsexual is, or how to change your sex, or at what precise instant a transition is good or bad. Because none of that would be true, no truer than the ray of afternoon sun falling on a certain spot on the planet and changing according to the place from which it is seen. No truer than that the slow orbit described by Uranus as it revolves above the Sun is yellow. I cannot tell you everything that goes on when you take testosterone, or what that does in your body. Take the trouble to administer the necessary doses of knowledge to yourself, as many as your taste for risk allows you.

I have not come for that. As my indigenous Chilean

mother Pedro Lemebel said, I do not know why I come, but I am here. In this Uranian apartment that overlooks the gardens of Athens. And I'll stay a while. At the crossroads. Because intersection is the only place that exists. There are no opposite shores. We are always at the crossing of paths. And it is from this crossroad that I address you, like the monster who has learned the language of humans.

I no longer need, like Ulrichs, to assert that I am a masculine soul enclosed in a woman's body. I have no soul and no body. I have an apartment on Uranus, which certainly places me far from most Earthlings, but not so far that you can't come to see me. Even if only in dream...

### *Chronicles of the Crossing*

If this book is written under the sign of Uranus, it's because it contains some chronicles of the crossing. These texts were written mainly in airports and hotel rooms, for the French newspaper *Liberation* and for other European media outlets between 2013 and early 2018. When I began these columns, my name was still Beatriz, and, although I was a dissident as a queer lesbian, I still occupied a social, legal position as a woman. I am ending this book, still in the middle of the crossroads, signing with a new name and furnished with a new identity card indicating my legal sex as male. I have preserved the strict chronological order in which these columns were written, since it is also the sequence of this sexual and gender transition, the story of the crossing. In this sense, these columns have at least two authors: this dissonance makes exaggeratedly visible the division of the author into a multiplicity of voices that undergo the crossing – a

phenomenon that exists in any written work, but that is usually erased under the unicity of the author's name.

I will go so far as to say that it is processes of transition that best allow us to understand the political shift with which we are confronted worldwide. Sex change and migration are two practices that, by calling into question the political and legal architecture of patriarchal colonialism, of sexual difference and racial hierarchy, of family and nation-state, place a living human body inside the limits of citizenship, even of what we understand by 'humanity'. Beyond the geographical, linguistic or corporeal movements which characterize both journeys, it is the radical transformation not just of the traveller, but also of the human community that welcomes or rejects the traveller. The *ancien régime* (political, sexual, racial) criminalizes all practices of crossing. But whenever the passage is possible, the map of a new society begins to be outlined, with new forms of production and reproduction of life.

The crossing began in 2004, when for the first time I decided to self-administer small doses of testosterone. Then, for several years, travelling through a nameless space between female and male, between lesbian masculinity and drag king femininity, I experienced what we now call 'gender fluidity'. The fluidity of successive incarnations clashed with the social resistance to accepting the existence of a body outside of the binary gender system. I patched together this 'fluidity' like a gender alchemist by self-administering a quantity of testosterone that we call a 'threshold dose', since it does not set off the proliferation in the body of 'male secondary sex characteristics'. These chronicles begin somewhere on this threshold.

Paradoxically, I renounced fluidity because I desired

change. The crossing became the laboratory of this transformation. The decision to 'change sex' is necessarily accompanied by what Édouard Glissant calls 'a trembling' [*un tremblement*]. The crossing is a place of uncertainty, of the unobvious, of strangeness. It is not a weakness, but a power. 'The thinking of trembling,' writes Glissant, 'is not the thinking of fear. It is the thinking that is opposed to the system.' In September 2014, I began a medical-psychiatric sex change procedure in New York, at the Audre Lorde Clinic, one of the only institutions in the world managed by queer and trans activists. 'Changing sex' is not, as the guardians of the sexual *ancien régime* would have it, leaping into psychosis. But it is also not, as the new neoliberal management of sexual difference claims, a simple medico-legal procedure that can be carried out during puberty to lead to absolute normality and invisibility. A process of gender change in a society dominated by the scientific-mercantile axiom of the binary sex-gender-sexuality regime – where social, labour, emotional, economic, gestational, etc., spaces are segmented in terms of masculinity or femininity, heterosexuality or homosexuality – implies crossing a border that may be, along with that of race, the most violent of political borders invented by humanity. To cross is at the same time to leap over an infinite vertical wall and to walk on a line drawn in the air. If the hetero-patriarchal system of sexual difference is the scientific religion of the West, then changing one's sex can be nothing other than an act of heresy. As the dose of testosterone increased, the changes became more intense: facial hair is just one detail related to the rupture that the change in voice sets off in social recognition. Testosterone provokes a variation in the thickness of the vocal cords, a muscle that, by changing its shape,

changes the tone and register of the voice. The gender traveller feels the change in voice as a possession, an act of ventriloquism, which forces them to identify themselves with the unknown. This mutation is one of the most beautiful things I have experienced. To be trans is to desire a process of internal 'creolization': to accept that one can only arrive at oneself thanks to change, to mutation, to hybridization. The voice that testosterone propels into my throat is not that of a man, it is the voice of the crossing. The voice that trembles in me is the voice of the border. 'We understand the world better,' Glissant writes, 'when we tremble with it, for the world trembles in every direction.'

With the change of voice came the change of name. For a little while, I wanted my feminine first name to be treated as masculine. I wanted to keep calling myself Beatriz and to be treated, according to the rules of grammar, with masculine pronouns and adjectives. But this grammatical torsion was even more difficult than the corporeal fluidity of gender. So I decided to look for a masculine first name.

In May 2014, Subcomandante Marcos announced in an open letter from 'Zapatista reality' the death of Marcos, who had been invented as a faceless name to give a voice to the revolutionary process in Chiapas. In this same letter, the Subcomandante said he would stop calling himself Marcos and take the name Subcomandante Galeano instead, in homage to José Luis Solís Sánchez alias Galeano, assassinated in May 2014. So I thought of calling myself Marcos. I wanted to take this name as a Zapatista mask covering my face and my patronymic. Marcos was a way to de-privateize my old name, to collectivize my face. My decision was immediately denounced in social networks by Latin American activ-



ists as a colonialist gesture. They asserted that, as a white Spaniard, I could not bear the name Marcos. The political fiction only lasted a few days. This name, the failure of an attempt at a political graft, exists only as an ephemeral trace inserted into the signature to the *Liberation* column dated 7 May 2014. The Latin American activists were probably right. There was colonial arrogance, personal vanity, in my action. But there was also a desperate search for protection. Who dares abandon their name to take a name without history, without memory, without life? I learned two seemingly contradictory things from this failure in grafting the name Marcos onto myself: I would have to fight for my name; and, at the same time, my name would have to be an offering, it had to be given to me like a talisman.

I asked my friends to choose a name for me: I wanted the new name to be chosen in cooperation with others. But none of the names proposed (Orlando, Max, Pascal...) leapt out as my own. That's when I began a series of shamanic rituals to find a name. I submitted myself to do whatever was necessary to change. I abandoned myself to the crossing. That is how I finally dreamed of my new first name, one December night in 2015 in a bed in the Gothic Quarter of Barcelona: I accepted the strange, absurdly commonplace name of Paul, which was given to me in a dream. I asked everyone to call me by that name. At the same time, I began a legal process to change my name and sex. With the lawyer Carme Herranz, we asked the Spanish government for a legal sex change so that my body would be recognized as a man, and the name of Paul Beatriz as a masculine name. After months of silence and administrative uncertainty, the legal decision was handed down on 16 November 2016. My new name was published,

according to the Spanish legislation then in force, among the names of the children born that day in the city where I was born over forty years ago. These chronicles record this change of voice and name. Until December 2015, they are signed with the name Beatriz, except for the one I signed, temporarily and briefly, under the name Beatriz Marcos. Starting from January 2016, it's Paul B. who signs. In any case, the signature, undone and remade, erased and written by a multitude of political acts, does not appear here as a mark of authority, but as a witness of the crossing.

A gender transition is a journey marked by many borders. Perhaps to intensify the experience of the crossing, I never travelled as much as I did during the months of the most acute part of my transition and my process of searching for a name. As in the Biblical journey, my trip began with the loss of paradise: the death of Pepa, the end of a relationship, the loss of my curatorial job at the museum, the collapse of the Programme for Independent Studies at MACBA, leaving my house, going far from Paris... To these involuntary losses, other strategic losses should be added: I had made up my mind to dis-identify myself. The increase of the testosterone dose not only upended femininity as social identification code, fluidity of face, erasing of name, but also, for months, the loss of my status as a legal citizen. With an increasingly masculine appearance and a feminine identity card, I lost the privilege of social invisibility and gender impunity. I became a gender migrant. In this situation, with a passport that was called into question at every border, I accepted the job as Curator of Public Programmes for documenta 14, the international art exhibition. I moved to Athens and devoted myself to travel: Palermo, Buenos Aires, Istanbul, Lyon, Kiev, Zurich, Barcelona,

Turin, Madrid, Frankfurt, New York, Bergen, Chicago, Rome, Iowa, Berlin, Kassel, London, Cartagena de Indias, Vienna, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, Trondheim, Mexico City, Dublin, Helsinki, Amsterdam, Bogota, San Francisco, Geneva, Rotterdam, Munich, the Greek islands, Lesbos, Hydra, Alonissos, Arles, Beirut, Taipei... I crossed countless borders with this constantly questioned passport, adapting to political contexts that required a rapid re-feminization: a good shave, a scarf around my neck, a handbag, a higher-pitched voice... and my body, in an attempt to cross the border, would reincarnate the femininity that I had erased in order to become Paul. The crossing requires both flexibility and determination. The crossing demands losses, but these losses are the requirement for the ability to invent freedom.

Without a masculine or feminine face, without a fixed name and with an uncertain passport, I settled in Athens: a gateway-city between West and East, a city at a crossroads. I arrived in a Greece hit with debt and austerity policies, confronted with managing the influx of thousands of migrants and refugees who were crossing the Mediterranean shores to escape the postcolonial wars and poverty of the Middle East. Athens was a unique observatory for understanding the processes of the neoliberal destruction of Europe, social control via debt economy, and reconstructing nation-states as phantom enclaves for restoring racial and patriarchal sovereignty in a context of worldwide war and financial globalization. I felt as if Athens were trembling like my voice, and I loved it as I had never loved any other city. I fell in love with its streets, its inhabitants, its language. Athens became for me the school of metamorphoses.

During the summer of 2015, the city was going

through a twofold political collapse. Tsipras's government rejected the democratic vote against austerity measures. At the same time, the port at Piraeus and Victoria Square became improvised refugee camps without water, food or any infrastructure. As was the case at the end of the 1980s during the AIDS crisis in New York, and then during the 15-M movement in Madrid and Barcelona in 2011, a new political form took shape on 5 July 2015, during the referendum, when hundreds of thousands of Athenians, citizens and migrants, gathered on Syntagma Square, said *oxi* [no] and chanted "They do not represent us." The utopia of representative social democracy was collapsing. The Greek Parliament was a building of hollow authority. The real parliament was in the streets of Athens.

Against the 'end of history' theory according to which the neoliberal forces of globalization act as a vector of democratization and homogenization that erode nation-states by building a single world without borders, a new global order was being defined by the reconstruction of borders of race, class, gender and sexuality. The economic and political restructuring that followed the financial crisis of 2008 as well as the reaction of European governments faced with the exodus of populations fleeing hunger and war in Iraq and Syria, but also in several countries in Africa, condemned a large part of the population worldwide to the position of stateless pariahs of neoliberalism. What we had never imagined could happen was coming to pass: not only did neoliberalism not destroy nation-states, but rather it established an alliance with the most conservative political segments of nation-states in order to limit the access of the lower classes to the technologies of production of power and knowledge. A new political cycle began,

characterized by the process that Deleuze and Guattari called 'Oedipal resurgences and fascist concretions'.<sup>1</sup>

It is not by chance, then, that the first column signed with my new name is the one dated 16 January 2015. This column speaks of another crossing, the 'process' that could lead to an independent Catalonia. A process that, like a sex change, always risks crystallizing around the construction of a normative identity of exclusion. 'Subject' and 'nation' are nothing but normative fictions that seek to put an end to the processes of subjectivation and to social creation as constant transformation. Subjectivity and society are made up of a multiplicity of heterogeneous forces, and cannot be reduced to a single identity, a single language, a single culture or a single name. Ridiculous when it is expressed as a fight for independence of one state over another, the process underway in Catalonia only takes on all its meaning when – as in the case of Rojava or Chiapas – it is open to the possibility of imagining an anarcho-queer, anti-state, trans-feminist collective order.

The trip to Athens, and my life there, made me realize that it wasn't just me undergoing change, but that we are all plunged in a worldwide transition. Science, technology, the market, are today re-drawing the limits of what is now, and what will be tomorrow, a living human body. These limits are defined not just in relation to animality and forms of life that historically have been considered sub-human (proletarian, non-white, non-masculine, trans, disabled, sick, migrant...), but also in relation to the machine, to artificial intelligence, to automation of the processes of production and reproduction. If the first industrial revolution was characterized, with the invention of the steam engine, by an acceleration of forms of production, the present technological revolution,

marked by genetic manipulation, nanotechnology, the technologies of communication, logistics, pharmacology and artificial intelligence, impacts the processes of reproducing life. In the current industrial mutation, the body and sexuality occupy the place occupied by the factory in the nineteenth century. There is at once a revolution of the underlings and the stateless underway, and a counter-revolutionary front fighting for control of the mechanisms of reproduction of life. At the four corners of the world, from Athens to Kassel, from Rojava to Chiapas, from Sao Paulo to Johannesburg, it is possible to sense not only the exhaustion of the traditional forms of politics, but also the emergence of hundreds of thousands of practices of social, sexual, gender, political and artistic experimentation... Faced with the rise in power politics of the crossing are at work everywhere.

Although the political context is that of a world war, you will find in these chronicles neither pedagogy nor morality. No dogma can resist the ordeal of the crossing. Even when I am angry, when I am responding to the activists of the LMPT<sup>1</sup> or to representatives of the regime of sexual difference, even when I am discoursing on the diatribes of the #MeToo movement against which the lords of sex express themselves to preserve their techno-patriarchal privileges. These chronicles speak of sluts and faggots, they do not speak of the 'sociology of deviance', they speak of the dissidents of gender and sexuality and not of 'gender dysphorics and transsexuals', they speak of strategies of cooperation between the powerless and migrants and not of the 'Greek crisis'

<sup>1</sup> 'La Manif pour tous' (The Protest for Everyone), one of the main organizations in France advocating against same-sex marriage.

or the 'refugee crisis', they speak of the right of everyone to live in the city and not of 'urban tribes' or 'marginal neighbourhoods'. I leave these words and expectations of classification and control to the experts of different disciplines – as Thomas Bernhard says, when knowledge is dead, they call it the academy. In these texts I propose to think in terms of relation and potential for transformation, rather than in terms of identity.

In the texts that follow, I use a certain amount of rudimentary critical vocabulary which was invented in the past few years by feminist, queer, trans, anti-colonial discourses of somatopolitical dissidence. I put on a terminological coat when I write, like a migrant who needs a warm coat to survive the winter of what some call 'hospitality' and that amounts to only the (more or less violent) negotiation of the frontier. This proliferation of new critical terms is essential: it acts as a solvent on normative languages, as an antidote to dominant categories. On one hand, it is imperative to distinguish ourselves from the dominant scientific, technological, commercial, legal languages that comprise the cognitive skeleton of the epistemology of sexual difference and techno-patriarchal capitalism. On the other, it is urgent to invent a new grammar that allows us to imagine another social organization of forms of life. In the first task, philosophy acts, after Nietzsche, as a critical hammer. In the second, closer to Monique Wittig, Ursula K. Le Guin, Donna Haraway, Kathy Acker or Virginie Despentes, philosophy becomes experimental political writing that seeks to imagine a world. Both languages are trans-border strategies. It is also a question of crossing the borders between philosophical genres; epistemological borders, between documentary, scientific, and fictional languages; the borders of gender, the

borders between languages and nationalities, those that separate humanity from animality, the living from the dead, the borders between today and history.

Uranus approached the Earth in 2013, when I began these columns and when I ventured onto the paths of the crossing. I like to think that the frozen giant will return in 2096, in seventy-eight years, after a complete revolution around the sun. Then, with all certainty, my body (intersex, transsexual, masculine, feminine, monstrous, glorious) will no longer exist as conscious flesh on the planet. I wonder if, between now and then, we will manage to overcome racial epistemology and sexual difference and to invent a new cognitive framework allowing the existence of life's diversity. Or if, on the contrary, the colonial techno-patriarchy will have destroyed the last vestiges of life on Earth. I will never know. But I hope that the cursed, innocent children will still be here to welcome Uranus again.

Athens, 5 October 2018