

## COSMIC AUSTERITY<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** This essay has a fabulist tone that blends philosophical writing with literary expression. It is an attempt to compose memory assemblages through poetic plasticity tied to the play between retention and retrieval. This play is based on the logic of addition, as conceived by Bensusan in *Memory Assemblages: Spectral Realism and the Logic of Addition*. With this aim in mind—an aim that is simultaneously ethical, political, and aesthetic—I divide the text into six more or less connected parts. The opening section functions as an introduction to the ineffectivity of knowledge in the face of the vastness of the cosmos. The second part constitutes the first assemblage of the text: here, I attempt to show the creative character of retrieval, which adds origins to a single history or different histories to a single origin. The third part refers to the second assemblage, where I retell a love history constructed through the logic of addition: this spectral history deals with the non-reciprocity between the self and the other in the kinetic and poetic composition of a fluid relation with the memory of the disappeared who, although expropriated from the future by the rupture of the present, still possess an ancestral genealogy to be retraced on account of a somewhat unreasonable feeling, namely, homesick. The fourth part of the essay corresponds to the third assemblage: in it, I seek to retrace, through the errancy typical of cockroaches, the possible genealogies of the disappeared. More precisely, drawing on cockroaches, I argue that spectral ultrametaphysics is a submetaphysics, since the transcendence pertaining to the addition of errancy takes place in cosmic immanence—or better, along the path of horizontal displacement toward the multiple recesses of the world that open by the exercise of the future-and-the-past, i.e, the agglutination between the future and the past. The fifth part of the text is the fourth assemblage: at this point, I return to the love history previously narrated to retell it under the sign of Saturn, the planet of slow revolutions and delays. In this assemblage, I attempt to indicate the extent to which the ineffectivity of Saturnine love corrodes the *ethos* of capitalist despair. Finally, in the last breath of the text, I seek to quickly explain what I understand by *cosmic austerity* and how it relates to the spectral demand for justice.

**KEYWORDS:** Memory; Love; Addition; Future-and-the-past; Cosmos; Saturn.

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## I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY

After all that's been said, I don't know what to say. It's possible I have something to say without knowing it. It's possible I have something to say because, according to Bensusan in *Memory Assemblages: Spectral Realism and the Logic of Addition*<sup>2</sup>, there's always an exteriority, an "outside" that exceeds the retained and prevents it from solidifying into a single form. The plasticity of mnemonic retention lies in retrieval through addition—an addition that introduces some intensity of exteriority to the retained. So, it's likely I will have something to say.

### ASSEMBLAGE 1. INEFFECTIVITY. 4<sup>TH</sup> OF APRIL 2025

Today, I'll say something that may sound unphilosophical—it's what I imagine. Personally, I no longer feel the need to remain bound to the specter of academic transparency. I've decided to dissipate it precisely because it's too transparent. So, I'll say something that, in the name of academic transparency, I couldn't say, and I say it in the name of memory assemblage: to experience it not as a sedimented repository but as a plastic retrieval along the lines of spectral realism's addition, where retention requires retrieval. This is, then, one of the central theses of Shajara Neehilan Bensusan's *Memory Assemblages*. I retain this thesis to retrieve it in the undecidability of discourse's ineffectivity.

Reason cannot show us how things truly are; at most, thought can show us that things *are* and *are not* simultaneously, and this, as Bensusan explains, is due to the indexical impurity of thought:

(...) the crucial presupposition that the intelligibility of the world can be at least to a great extent transparent is itself unsound. (...) The match provided by indexicals could delude thought to believe that something general and substantive is at work, but the delusion disappears when the indexicality of the match is made explicit. In any case, if thought and the world are enmeshed in indexicals and thus thoroughly situated, there can be no general capacity in thought to connect it to any substantive course of things in the world.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Hilan Bensusan, *Memory Assemblages: Spectral Realism and the Logic of Addition*, London, Bloomsbury, 2024.

<sup>3</sup>Bensusan, *Memory Assemblages*, 147, 150.

I retain, then, one of Bensusan's key theses to adulterate<sup>4</sup> it through asymmetrical addition tied to divergence, since I'm not at all committed to the rules of a community that dictates right and wrong, or worse, moralizes every teaching and learning process. As I said from the beginning of this account, I'm not interested in transparency, and perhaps that's why I don't desire convergence but rather deviations, which some communities decode, categorize, describe, and proscribe as pathological.

Divergence is common when thinking with the heart. Poets, generally, don't fear divergence. But this kind of courage still haunts transparent reason, which perceives danger in the open sea. As Bensusan explains, "the issue of convergence is entwined with that of transparency: the voice cannot be effective because its command is not transparent; it is not transparent because only a finite number of examples can be given for each rule."<sup>5</sup> Memory assemblages: their compositions and recompositions are infinite and thus divergent. In the logic of addition, paths diverge, and their divergence may stem from the fact that thought isn't pure: to think is to imagine and feel; to imagine and feel involves, in turn, the repeatedly novel act of remembering and envisioning.

In other words, imagination agglutinates with sensation, expressed in the form of a future memory—that is, in the graphic form of the conditional, the most plastic of verb tenses and thus the most cinematic, since it takes us back to the future-and-the-past. According to Marguerite Duras, whose texts and scripts were sustained by the agglutination of present, past, and future, as well as by the furtive and paradoxical play between light and dark—a play of colors illuminated by the ubiquity of the midnight sun<sup>6</sup>... According to Duras:

The conditional applies better than any other mood to the idea of artifice that sustains both literature and cinema. Every event appears as the potential, hypothetical consequence of something else. Playing, fully aware of the fiction and yet of the lightness of the game, children constantly conjugate verbs in the

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<sup>4</sup> On the philosophical methodology of adulteration, see Cassiana Stephan, 'O desejo filosófico por escrita: um problema de gênero', *Aurora*, vol. 37, 2025, 1-20.

<sup>5</sup> Bensusan, *Memory Assemblages*, 149.

<sup>6</sup> On the philosophy whose enlightenment comes from the dark light of the midnight sun, see Cassiana Stephan, 'O sol-da-meia noite: fundamentações submetafísicas para uma metodologia de barata', *Avesso* 1, 2025, 1-24.

conditional. (...) I content myself with eliminating the superfluous—that which, in a film, serves to connect sequences, giving the whole context a sense of the natural, the illusion of reality. On the contrary, I've always wanted to stimulate the viewer's awareness, forcing them to work to reassemble what had been given to them as unified and pre-digested.<sup>7</sup>

Spectral realism, unlike Duras's conception of reality in this passage, embraces fiction, hypothesis, uncertainty, the said and unsaid, fragmentation, and the indefinite conjunction of assemblage. Apparently, the physics, or rather, the ultrametaphysical characteristic of spectral realism doesn't correspond to the hermeneutic circle of sequentiality typical of modernity's conception of nature. In this sense, Duras's aesthetic attitude seems to border, without necessarily converging on memory assemblage. Duras's texts are like infinite puzzles that, though indexed, surpass spatiotemporal quadratures, giving rise to the infinite multiplication of *erstwhiles* and *hereafters*, as well as *heres* and *theres*. In Duras, there's always something that escapes any attempt to recover what's already been read or seen. Thus, every attempt at absolute apprehension, comprehension, and understanding is, in her work, ineffective. The narrator of *The Malady of Death*<sup>8</sup>, a *récit* first published in 1982, seems to know this: she seems to know that knowledge is ineffective, at least in its absolute pretensions. The narrator, who in my mind has Duras's husky voice, says the following about the knowledge that would, at first, constitute the marital intimacy of the lovers...she says to him, who insists on the effectivity of total knowledge of his lover-wife:

Nor will you, or anyone else, ever know how she sees, how she thinks, either of the world or of you, of your body or your mind, or of the malady she says you suffer from. She doesn't know, herself. She couldn't tell you. You couldn't find out anything about it from her. You'd never know anything, neither you nor anyone else, about what she thinks of you or of this affair. However many ages may bury both your forgotten existences, no one will ever know.<sup>9</sup>

Effectivity sediments the retained by dissociating it from retrieval. The

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<sup>7</sup> Marguerite Duras and Leopoldina Pallota della Torre, *La passion suspendue*, Paris, Seuil, 2013, 73, 112.

<sup>8</sup> Marguerite Duras, *The Malady of Death*, trans. Barbara Bray, New York, Grove Press, 1986.

<sup>9</sup> Duras, *The Malady of Death*, 14, 15.

solidity of effectivity prevents the plastic penetration of what escapes. Sad is the reality of those who cannot reunite, in the form of retrieval, the said and unsaid, words and things. Retention isn't enough, retrieval is necessary. To think with Duras, we might say that love cannot be retained in the form of a marital contract seeking to establish the convention of total fusion between self and other, an effective melting from which nothing would remain to be added. In Duras, *the malady of death* arises from the disjunction between retention and retrieval—or rather, from the metaphysical mummification of lovers guided by the hand of the social contract. Duras doesn't want this logic to prevail in the fictional reality of her texts and scripts. She doesn't retain rules. Instead, she induces without latent assertiveness, prompting us to construct interpretive sets and conjunctions beyond good and evil, right and wrong.

We are incapable of fully knowing others—that can be frightening enough. But perhaps even more frightening is this: we are not capable of fully knowing ourselves. Every process of becoming aware of oneself, to think with Judith Butler, is ineffective. The memory mobilized in the encounter of the self with the other, or of the self with oneself, does not respect metaphysical rules that moralize and immobilize our way of thinking about what we are and are not, about what we were and were not, about what we could have been, about what we could be. Retrievals transgress contracts, and in transgressing them, they become adulteries. The logic of addition that moves the ultrametaphysics of spectral realism is adulterous and therefore opposed to marriages that promise fidelity but never addition. Like Duras, Judith Butler seems to converge with Bensusan's hypothesis of ineffectivity through divergence—not only in the divergence of the self in relation to the other, but in the divergence of the self in relation to oneself. In *Giving an Account of Oneself: A Critique of Ethical Violence*<sup>10</sup>, first published in 2003, Butler explains the following about the histories we tell about ourselves:

Fictional narration in general requires no referent to work as narrative, and we might say that the irrecoverability and foreclosure of the referent is the very condition of possibility for an account of myself, if that account is to take narrative form. The irrecoverability of an original referent does not destroy narrative; (...).

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<sup>10</sup> Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself: A Critique of Ethical Violence*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2005.

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So to be more precise, I would have to say that I can tell the story of my origin and I can even tell it again and again, in several ways. But the story of my origin I tell is not one for which I am accountable, and it cannot establish my accountability.<sup>11</sup>

The irrecoverability of an original referent does not mean the irrecoverability of *any* referent, nor the inexistence of referents altogether. Butler has no metaphysical impulses: she does not seem to work, to recall once more Bensusan, in the wake of Aristotle's *dúnamis metà lógou*, according to which "one can reason properly no matter where or when one is; [in that case] thinking is constructed as a capacity to deterritorialize."<sup>12</sup> What Butler seems to tell us is that, depending on when and where I am, I tell my own history differently—a history that, through addition, gains multiple versions, multiple facets, multiple sides, multiple assemblages. This means that for one history there are many origins, and for a supposed single origin there are many histories. The logic of addition, which permeates Bensusan's ultrametaphysics, also seems to permeate Butler's genealogy. To tell my history is always to tell it differently, and that telling takes place through addition, i.e., retrieving what I am without necessarily having been. Butler, through the indexicalism of intoxication, seems to recover the retained hypothesis of the ineffectivity of thought. What is at stake in Butler's indexicalism of intoxication is territorialization: everything depends on a non-original referent, everything depends on how much wine I drink, with whom, why, when, and where. The situation demands the retrieval of what was retained, and that retrieval occurs through addition, addition enhanced by the wine that makes me tell my own history in different ways. The wine-enhanced addition manifests ineffectivity through spectrality, because, as Bensusan explains, "according to the spectral realism of addition, both thought and the world are composed of memory assemblages, and no landscape is retained in its full content, irrespective of how it is retrieved."<sup>13</sup> Reason and reasoning do not grant us full knowledge of the self, the other, nor of the much-more-than-human vastness of the cosmos.

But before mentioning the ultrametaphysical dimension of the much-more-

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<sup>11</sup> Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, 37.

<sup>12</sup> Bensusan, *Memory Assemblages*, 149.

<sup>13</sup> Bensusan, *Memory Assemblages*, 151.

than-human vastness of the cosmos, I would like to bring to the surface, prompted by the indexing of intoxication that mingles with this writing, a memory that anachronistically marks today's date, namely, the 4<sup>th</sup> of the 4<sup>th</sup> that turns into 8, whose horizontal script leads me toward infinity:  $\infty$ .

## ASSEMBLAGE 2. CELEBRATION

On this day, he and she would celebrate their marriage.

1989 was the year they married.

The celebration was always silent: mostly just between the two of them and the two of us, who emerged in 1989 and 1991, respectively. In the logic of addition, the 4<sup>th</sup> of the 4<sup>th</sup> forms a triangulation marked by another 4 (them 2 and us 2), which equals 12. Celebration is an additive production of memory: from 1989 to 1991, we re-commemorated this marriage's history twice, when we were still three. After 1991, when we became four in a perfect triangulation of  $4 + 4 + 4$ , we re-commemorated it 23 times. These were 25 infinite assemblages lasting until 2014: the number emerging from this spectral addition is 7 ( $2+5=7$ ;  $2+0+1+4=7$ ).

7: the lucky indexical number uniting east, west, north, south, up, and down. Beyond 7, the infinitely unknown: the toppled 8 emerging from  $4+4$ . Unlike the Kabbalah's teaching, 7 here doesn't denote totality and conclusion. It denotes only totality, never conclusion, especially if we follow Bensusan's logic of addition tied to the spectral realism. Thus, 7 denotes the inefficacy of the commemorated relationship, which was eternal while it lasted but immortalized beyond that duration, since he still lingers, observes us, and remains our concern. 7 is an asymmetrical number, divisible only by 1 and by itself—a prime number, spectral in this mathematics of lovers' memory. She still loves him but no longer knows if he loves her. After 2014, she sometimes believed he would, despite the incalculable distance between them.

Perhaps mourning is one of the most melancholic assemblages of memory's spectrality. And I'll try to explain it without Freud, only by retrieving what she told me in mnemonic confidence.

Her memory of him invaded her soul uninvited. Suddenly, he was there. At first, she said, his presence comforted her. She felt good transgressing—somehow, in some unknown way—the modern boundaries separating sleep from wakefulness. Because of this transgression, she said she didn't consider herself modern, perhaps she never was. She felt closer to witches than to the moderns who erased them from history for

patriarchy's effectivity. Later— *later* refers to a time I can't pinpoint, as sequentiality was completely disrupted in this agglutinated account—she said he began to frighten her. His absent-presence no longer guaranteed the reciprocity of their love. As Bensusan explains via Derrida: “the diachrony of memories entails an asymmetry. Derrida also notices that the ‘specter is not simply this visible invisible that I can see, it is someone who watches or concerns me without any possible reciprocity.’”<sup>14</sup> I repeat: without any possible reciprocity.

From this lack of reciprocity in spectrality my question about the cosmic austerity of spectral cosmopolitanism arises. Perhaps the twilight of the midnight sun, which also illuminated Duras's texts and scripts, can help us think this ultrametaphysical (because subterranean) problem.<sup>15</sup>

### ASSEMBLAGE 3. ULTRAMETAPHYSICS IS SUBMETAPHYSICS

The problem is ultrametaphysical because it is subterranean. Bensusan borrows the concept of “ultrametaphysics” from Catherine Malabou, who presents it in *La plasticité au soir de l'écriture*.<sup>16</sup> Bensusan tells us that in this text, Malabou explains that ultrametaphysics concerns “the idea that there are different possible elaborations suitably placed in the *day after* of metaphysics, a plurality of paths for thinking at the twilight of the metaphysical proposition.”<sup>17</sup>

After metaphysics, ultrametaphysics, which is also submetaphysics. The one who showed me that ultrametaphysics is also submetaphysics was an entity, so old as to be immemorial.<sup>18</sup> Immemorial in the sense that this entity is an archaic, dusty, crusty archive that allows us to recover a multiplicity of cosmic assemblages. After all, as G.H. explains in *A Paixão segundo G.H.*, first published in 1964, this entity, this specter hiding inside one of her wardrobes, was already on Earth “before even the first dinosaurs had appeared,” before the first human had emerged; this entity had “witnessed the formation of the great oil and coal deposits (...)” and lived “during the great advance and later the great retreat of

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<sup>14</sup> Bensusan, *Memory Assemblages*, 3.

<sup>15</sup> On the submetaphysics, see Stephan, ‘O sol-da-meia noite’, 1-24.

<sup>16</sup> Catherine Malabou, *La plasticité au soir de l'écriture: dialectique, destruction, déconstruction*, Paris, Leo Scheer, 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Bensusan, *Memory Assemblages*, 130.

<sup>18</sup> Clarice Lispector, *A paixão segundo G.H.*, Rio de Janeiro, Rocco, 2020, 46.

the glaciers.”<sup>19</sup> This dusty entity showed me ultrametaphysics is submetaphysics because this archive belongs to a cosmopolitan, non-metaphysical group. Among the members of this group, there is a subgroup whose name does justice to the practice of non-metaphysical cosmopolitanism: *Periplaneta americana*, so named in 1758 by the Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus. The assemblage of the Greek preposition “*peri*” and the Greek noun “*planēta*” means “those who wander about”. Probably “*peri*” could be rendered as “around,” while “*planēta*”, the dual accusative of “*planētēs*”, means “wanderers.” Cockroaches, so common here and so indexed to Brazil, were not born here (*here* because I’m here, in Brazil). They came from Africa and the West Asia—perhaps like most of our ancestors, certainly like my own. My ancestors, for example, as far as I know and my knowledge is not effective), most likely came with the cockroaches, tracing with them a long path that began back in the *miranete* and ended in the invention of a Westernized name for the sake of Western passability in the West.

The metaphysical tradition differs from the submetaphysical culture tied to cockroaches, who endure in the ruins of vertical transcendence, spreading horizontally toward a plurality of paths. The metaphysical tradition takes us to a transcendence that makes us forget the world in its vastness, keeping us in the solipsism of ideas, of forms—or, indeed, of the unique, the one, the completed totality that allows no exteriority. By contrast, the submetaphysical culture grounded in cockroaches also enacts, promotes, or consists in the experience of transcendence—that is, of the *beyond* indicated by the Greek prefix “*meta*” in the word “metaphysics”.<sup>20</sup> However, in the case of submetaphysics, the experience of the beyond does not occur through connection with what is “above.” On the contrary, it happens through a horizontal connection with what is considered “below”: this kind of connection is like the voice that, emanating from the *miranete*, spreads through alleyways and ruins to be heard across great distances in the vast cosmic field.

In the case of submetaphysics, transcendence is experienced as a disintegrative plunge that never reaches the limit of the bottom, a plunge that disintegrates the ego into the cosmos. That is why the hermit and the deep-sea

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<sup>19</sup> Lispector, *A paixão segundo G.H.*, 46.

<sup>20</sup> For the Greek words, see Henry Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek–English Lexicon*. Simon Wallenberg Press, 2007.

diver are figures of transcendence that evoke the cosmic nomadism typical of the cockroach's cosmopolitanism. The hermit and the diver are as communal as cockroaches, for they do not surrender to metaphysical philosophical solipsism. Instead, they give themselves over to social dissolution in relation to others, merging with the desert sand and the sand at the bottom of the sea through the disintegration of the ego in its human loftiness. The transcendence that throws us into the beyond via connection with the *sub*—linked to the Greek prefix “*hupo*”—emerges from G.H.'s transgressive act in contacting the filthy, or rather, the spectral underworld of the cockroach, which wanders among flat surfaces and twisting labyrinths, enduring in the ruins of metaphysics and capitalism.

At twilight they endure—in the *twilight* of the midnight sun—since *Periplaneta americana* belongs to the order *blattodea* and the family *blattidae*. The prefixes of these two complicated words take us back to the Latin *blatta*<sup>21</sup>, meaning “insect that flees/avoids light”, and the Greek verb *bláptein*, meaning, broadly, “to harm, to disturb”. Those who flee from light disturb precisely as they wander in the dark. In general, wanderers disturb—and almost every meeting between wanderers is disturbing. As Bensusan explains, drawing on Levinas: “my encounter with any other is asymmetric and anachronic because the other appears as an addend stirring up what has been in retention in me—in retention as what I am.”<sup>22</sup> Even though they do not respect our social conventions, by disturbing us, cockroaches appeal to the respect that “is part of the impulse to act that features in any haunting.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, in contradicting our transparent humanism, they display a commitment to the many worlds of the world, to the worlds that have been and to the many worlds that might come to be. This kind of commitment to the many worlds of the world is constitutive of the displacements and communal dispersions across the world, whether caused by human violence or by Gaia's intrusion. When we disperse, we commit ourselves to the worlds that have been and to the many worlds that might come to be, through the plasticity that composes addition—or rather, through the plastic addition that gathers what remains and what has been lost, for the sake of memory's becoming as retrieving. This seems

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<sup>21</sup> For the Latin words, see Charlton Thomas Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary*, Omaha, Patristic Publishing, 2019.

<sup>22</sup> Bensusan, *Memory Assemblages*, 133.

<sup>23</sup> Bensusan, *Memory Assemblages*, 3.

to me to characterize endurance, understood, following Povinelli, as “the refusal to consider the substance of being as a secondary quality.”<sup>24</sup> Endurance drives recovery and, at times, resumption in an ineffective process of territorialization in dispersion.

This kind of wisdom is ineffective because it does not rest on the principle of accumulation, but on the logic of addition, which does not fear loss but confronts it with a view to what may come to be. There is an expression we use in Portuguese that seems to capture the plasticity of addition quite well: “Let the rings go, and let the fingers remain”. The one who always said this to me was *him*, who married *her* in 1989 and disappeared in 2014. Perhaps he said this because he was forced to leave the *miranete* with his ancestors, forced to disperse and live the next day in a process of territorialization *over there*. One day he was a man in the sun, as Ghassan Kanafani would say, and the next day he retained the sun in the form of twilight, “for the small world, dark as night, crossed the desert like a heavy drop of oil on a sheet of hot tin.”<sup>25</sup> Every time we looked at his spectral silhouette—the one who married her in 1989—we saw a man who, after years and years of dispersion, remained golden as if still under the desert sun. It is interesting to think how we retain certain traces of our past, no matter how forcibly they may have been torn from us. His golden skin, as if toasted by the sun, returns amid crepuscular darkness as a demand for justice.<sup>26</sup>

#### ASSEMBLAGE 4. TWILIGHT OR HOMESICKNESS

I miss what I never lived.

This feeling is common, more than we imagine when we feel it.

It’s inevitable. Every time I see a pink cloud at twilight after intermittent summer rains, I’m connected to what never happened, to what was not, to what we did not do, to the cosmos I-am-and-am-not.

My heart aches when I miss what I have not lived. Before, I thought that one day I might live what I had not lived, and I even got excited about it. But today I know I will never live what I have not lived, even though this feeling endures

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<sup>24</sup> Elisabeth Povinelli, *Between Gaia and Ground: four Axioms of Existence and The Ancestral Catastrophe of Late Liberalism*, London, Duke university Press, 2021, 137.

<sup>25</sup> Ghassan Kanafani, *Homens ao Sol*, trans. Safa Jubran, Rio de Janeiro, Tabla, 2023, 81.

<sup>26</sup> Bensusan, *Memory Assemblages*, 10.

and swells my soul every time I see the pink cloud floating above me.

Usually it appears at twilight, at the end of the day, lit by the midnight sun that does not want to set. It is already time for it to set, but it refuses to abandon the horizon—perhaps because it miss what it has not lived, what it has not lived during the day.

This feeling is worthy of Saturn, some would say, Benjamin would say. Worthy of those born under Saturn's sign, characterizing the melancholic dimension of cosmic austerity dispersing me in the pink cloud guided by the midnight sun.<sup>27</sup>

When losing myself in this feeling, I know I'm losing (myself) through a kind of contemplation that does not lift (me) upward but rather plunges (me) into the beyond-here. This kind of sensation might also correspond to the experience of inveterate lovers, still in love. For those governed by the dark sun of midnight, the sun of Saturn, passion is nostalgically melancholic like the evening twilight.

There is a complex relationship between twilight and the memory of the love I have not yet lived because I cannot live it, given the dominance of the *ethos* of despair, which prevents us from plunging into the sky—whether with our hands, our eyes, our mouth, or our ears. The desperate do not understand what the pink cloud tries to communicate to us, the feeling it tries to show us, that it tries to swell in our soul.

There is also a not-so-complex relationship between despair and frenzy, the capitalist frenzy. Frenzy has no relation to the longing that connects us to the cosmos, to its immensity, its vastness, its multiversity. Frenzy is typically disconnected in cosmic terms. But I am entangled in it too.

For a few moments, I forget the frenzy that fuels my reality, to align myself with what the pink cloud communicates to me, i.e., to the cosmic memory I have suppressed to keep surviving in days like ours. It does not happen (to me) often. That is why I can say that when it (does) happens, it is an event.

In bringing my mouth closer to this cloud, letting our outermost points touch, I lose the triumphalism that once sustained me, instantly freeing myself from the cardinal guilt that entangles me in and with the frenzy of capital.

The pink cloud comes from the cosmic mixture of a series of inexplicable factors. Among the explainable factors, it is possible to list three elements that make up this cotton-candy landscape: the faintly visible reddish disk around Titan (Saturn's largest moon) + the white cloud floating over this moon + the

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<sup>27</sup> Walter Benjamin, 'Agesilaus Santander (Erste Fassung)', in R. Tiedemann; H. Schweppenhauser (ed.), *Gesammelte Schriften VI*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1991.

sunlight that, upon reaching this moon, reflects the midnight sun on Saturn.

The cloud hovering over this “me” that I no longer am is a multicolored assemblage with hues that blend and form the somber pink, yellowed twilight of almost every Saturnian evening.

Then, according to what I have not lived, I can say with absolute certainty that there is enough summer in Saturn for us to experience the anti-capitalist love of twilight.

Summer on Saturn may be mild, but it lasts much longer than 7 Earth years. And in it, the twilight of evening (re)appears every 10 Earth hours. Thus, this dark planet, where Titan’s light from the midnight sun becomes, on the very day following the end of metaphysical effectiveness, a favorable environment for love in its slow, delayed, ineffective, and austere cosmic version, for love in its anti-capitalist form.

The slowness of Saturn stands opposed (and this is obvious) to the *ethos* of despair embedded in our veins like poison. It is possible that love, in its Saturnian strangeness, might detach us from the self-serving frenzy of capital guilt.

#### WHAT IS COSMIC AUSTERITY? A BRIEF EXPLANATION

Austerity goes back to an ethic understood as an incessant commitment to life and not merely to discourse about life. Thus, I borrow the term “austerity” from Michel Foucault and from his moral oriented toward ethics—that is, from his ethics inspired by the ascetic exercises of care of the self, care of others, and care of the world, as practiced by the philosophers of Antiquity. I will not be able to reconstruct the assemblage of this typically Foucauldian memory concerning the Socratic-Platonic period, the Hellenistic-Roman period, and Christianity. For the closing moment of the present essay, I would simply like to stress that, under the aesthetic of existence or philosophical spirituality, austerity means a practical or ascetic commitment.<sup>28</sup> It is a commitment not grounded in the control of a future that might be secured. Rather, this commitment is rooted in infinite webs of past times that may be rearranged by virtue of a future that is, in this sense,

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<sup>28</sup> On Foucault's ethics of care inspired by ancient philosophers, see Michel Foucault, *L'herméneutique du sujet*, Paris, Gallimard/Seuil, 2001. On austerity as a commitment, see Cassiana Stephan, *O si mesmo, os outros e o mundo: o diálogo interrompido entre Michel Foucault e Pierre Hadot*, Rio de Janeiro, Via Verita, 2021. On the relationship between cosmic austerity and love, see Cassiana Stephan, *Amor pelo avesso: de Afrodite a Medusa. Estética da existência entre antigos e contemporâneos*, Curitiba, Kotter, 2022.

always already past. This type of commitment, by binding the past to the present and the present to the past through assemblages constituted within the logic of addition, allows “those dispossessed of the future” to confront such uncertainty in the demand for justice, as Saidiya Hartman shows us in *The End of White Supremacy – An American Romance*, published in 2020.<sup>29</sup> Cosmic austerity thus pertains to the experience of a “love without legacy.”<sup>30</sup> Love without legacy is typically Saturnine; it comes into the world in the formless form of the multiple assemblages that institute and reinstitute slow and hesitant revolutions through an endless retelling of what was, what is, and what could have been. This endless retelling slows down the desperate accelerationism of capitalism in its late structure.<sup>31</sup> In this way, as Bensusan explains:

(...) retelling the past and the impact of addends on memory cannot be anything but part of the permanent effort to readdress issues concerning justice. In other words, descriptions of how things are not only are themselves involved with demands for justice but can only be understood in this spectral way, for a world of memory assemblages is one in which no description is immune to addends.<sup>32</sup>

Cosmic austerity does not refer to fidelity to the norms that instantiate the *status quo*: such norms lack any commitment to the cosmos, given that they emerge from the very core of the games of interest of capital, which, in turn, represents the interests of white supremacy. The only principle that governs cosmic austerity is that of love without legacy of those dispossessed of the future. Saturnine lovers no longer expect anything from the future from which they have been expelled.<sup>33</sup> For this reason, they create and recreate scenes of an alternative future sustained in the past of the additive—and therefore adulterous—assemblage. That is why, like a pirate, he stole that phrase from Benjamin and said to her: “Hardly had I seen you for the first time when I returned with you to the place from which I came.”<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Saidiya Hartman, ‘The End of White Supremacy – An American Romance’, *Bomb Magazine*, 2020, §74.

<sup>30</sup> Hartman, ‘The End of White Supremacy’, §74.

<sup>31</sup> Benjamin, ‘Agesialus Santander’, 521.

<sup>32</sup> Bensusan, *Memory Assemblages*, 10.

<sup>33</sup> Benjamin, ‘Agesialus Santander’, 521.

<sup>34</sup> Benjamin, ‘Agesialus Santander’, 521.

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