SPECTRALITY AND THE ONTOLOGY OF AMERINDIAN MYTH

Leif Grünewald

ABSTRACT: This essay embarks upon a conceptual exploration into the intricate relationship between myth and spectrality within the context of Amerindian ontologies, primarily engaging with the theoretical frameworks of Claude Lévi-Strauss's *Mythologiques* and Hilan Bensusan's recent work on memory assemblages. It posits that myth, far from being a static repository of archaic narratives, functions as a dynamic operator, perpetually entangled with history, filtering and reconfiguring its perturbations to maintain semantic coherence. The inquiry navigates through Bensusan's notions of spectral ultrametaphysics and the logic of addition, hypothesizing an "intercode" that facilitates a translation between the concrete fabric of Indigenous thought and a philosophical discourse attuned to the persistence of the past. This past, it is argued, does not merely recede but rather accretes, returning spectrally to haunt and reconfigure the present. The essay thus seeks to elucidate how the "spirit of myth," characterized by its non-orientable topology and inherent endlessness, resonates with a conception of memory as an additive, generative force. Ultimately, it reconsiders myth not as an explanatory device but as a technology of non-disappearance, an ontological insurgency that proliferates versions and composes worlds through the incessant metamorphosis of forms and relations, thereby challenging Western metaphysical ambitions of fixity and totality.

KEYWORDS: Myth; Spectrality; Amerindian ontology; Lévi-Strauss; Memory assemblages; Transformation

1. PROLOGUE

The aim of this paper lies in the exploration of a conceptual pursuit that unfolds through the exposition and problematization of a theme—but what theme? It concerns something that allows itself to be seen and clarified through a particular interpretive key applied to the tetralogy of the *Mythologiques*, the series of monographs that Lévi-Strauss devoted to the mythology of Indigenous peoples of the South American lowlands, especially insofar as it probes the possible relation between myth and history. In particular, this essay draws inspiration from

the understanding that the *Mythologiques* do not treat myths as originally stable entities that merely waver in the face of historical irruptions. Quite the contrary. Their very existence has always been entangled with history, functioning as operators that filter and reconfigure its perturbations in order to maintain the coherence of meaning. Thus, myths do not appear as originally fixed structures that become destabilized when disrupted by history. On the contrary: they exist because of history and come into effect precisely in order to attenuate its disruptions and thereby preserve semantic consistency. In this sense, one might say that myths generate the appearance of stability, the illusion of a timelessness immune to the vicissitudes of the world—but they do so precisely through their incessant transformation.

The trajectory of this thematic exploration, and of the problems it gives rise to, proceeds chiefly through the recent argumentation developed by Hilan Bensusan (2024), which traverses the notions of spectral ultrametaphysics, the logic of addition, a relation between a speculative dimension and the concept of the spectre, the diachrony of addition, and the existence of deictic pasts. This itinerary, sketched primarily through a convergence between a synoptic key drawn from the *Mythologiques* and Bensusan's fundamental proposition that the past cannot disappear simply by going away—things return, albeit not exactly as they were, since their surroundings rarely return with them (instead, something added to the past brings back what happened before in spectral form)—necessarily leads, as I would like to hypothesize here, to the elaboration of an intercode. In this sense, what I seek to speculate is that it is this kind of semantic switchboard that would allow for the translation of certain expressions of the concrete fabric of a regime of thought characteristic of Indigenous narratives into the terms of a philosophical discourse that, by casting light on a mode of entanglement between memory and addition, brings into view an image of thought in which the past casts a spell. It proceeds by enchantment, leaving in its wake, spectrally, elements that cannot be swept away from the many ontological arrangements in which they persist as both matter and form.

It is within this context that the endeavor of this essay inscribes itself: to elucidate and render explicit the effects produced by a specific mode of composition and articulation between two heterogeneous mythical-theoretical languages, seeking to establish the conditions under which two regimes of enunciation—mobilized around what might occupy the place of truth—can be

thought in terms of their mutual convertibility. Accordingly, what lies ahead is not merely a speculative exercise, but an operation that unfolds continuously—saying, insinuating, clarifying, and explicating—around its problematic horizon: the encounter and confrontation between expressions of a regime of thought proper to Indigenous peoples of the Americas and discussions stemming from a Euro-American intellectual tradition.

2. AN AMERINDIAN MYTH

"One cannot expect any metaphysical complacency from myths." This assertion, inscribed by Lévi-Strauss in the closing pages of *L'Homme Nu* (1981), the final volume of the *Mythologiques* tetralogy, does not present itself as a belated conclusion, but rather as an inaugural warning: myths, contrary to the wishes of certain philosophical dispositions, do not concern themselves with answering grand questions about the order of the real, nor do they lend themselves to projects aimed at totalizing human experience around a principle of origin or finality. On the contrary—and precisely because of this—they insinuate themselves as devices that reject the stability of meaning, opening instead to the incessant metamorphosis of forms and relations. For, as Lévi-Strauss himself notes in his discussion of mythical structure (1981, p. 229), if "anything can take place in a myth," this means that the succession of events narrated therein eludes any logic of strict continuity or coherence; and this is because, in that universe, any subject may become any predicate, situating myth simultaneously within language and beyond it. It is within this regime of ceaseless transformations—engendered through oppositions that transmute and recombine—that myth reveals its hybrid nature: empirically endowed with an internal originarity, yet inevitably derivative when placed in relation to other myths, it is not located strictly within language or culture, but in the interweaving of the two, in that which pulses and slips away at their point of articulation. Thus, if mythical thought figures, in its essence, as a transformative force, it is also through this gesture of transformation that it expresses its punning potency—a quality to which Lévi-Strauss himself alludes in this very *Finale*—insofar as it displaces meanings and reconfigures the logical contexts that would otherwise predefine its intelligibility

At the very outset of this same *Finale*, Lévi-Strauss confesses that the long immersion in myths granted him something perhaps more vertiginous than

profound: the sensation that the solidity of the self—that inaugural obsession of Western philosophy—gradually dissolves as one applies oneself to the same object, penetrates it, dissolves it, absorbs it, and finally returns it to oneself in the form of an echo, a spectral reflection of its own unreality. And if, in the end, any reality remains, it will not be that of a substance—but that of a singularity, in the cosmological sense of the term: a point of intensity situated within a field of shifting relations, in which events have taken place, are taking place, or will yet take place—not by virtue of any hidden essence or underlying substrate, but by the fortuitous confluence of trajectories arriving from countless other places— places which, in truth, are often no more than names given to directions whose destinations remain, until the end, undecidable.

What resurfaces here, in a certain way, is the same audacious impulse that had already coursed through Lévi-Strauss in another of his theoretical itineraries—nearly two decades earlier, with the formulation of the bold notion of a "science of the concrete" in the opening chapter of *La Pensée Sauvage* (1962). That is: while that moment made explicit the boldness of an endeavor aimed at rehabilitating a form of thought in a wild state, one capable of tracing a line of flight beyond the great partition between "rational thought" and "primitive thought," it also presented, in the same gesture, an image of mythical thinking as an intellectual practice. This was a practice that, through the agglutination of other images bound univocally to acts of consciousness, analogies, proximities, and distances, would operate according to a logic of composition—such that the addition of a new element to the system would alter the totality of those already present. From this, mythical reflection emerged as a kind of conceptual bricolage, whose procedure consisted in the elaboration of structured ensembles through the recombination of residues, fragments, or leftovers of events. In this sense, a peculiar kind of freedom would prevail with regard to mythical thought: a freedom against non-sense. For myth, entirely bound to the events and experiences it gathers and reorganizes, deploys a structure that aims at the production of an absolute object—an object that presents itself not as an abstraction, but as a constellation of events which, assembled, allow meaning to emerge.

Thus transformed, myth invariably reveals itself as a translation of other myths—a translation only made possible through a regime of transformations

that operates by way of interconnected series of variations. One could say, as Gildas Salmon (2013) does, that one of the decisive outcomes of the *Mythologiques* tetralogy lies in demonstrating that such variations do not stem from random mutations, but are inscribed within a rigorous ordering governed by systematic rules of operation: inversion, substitution, transposition. Activated on different levels, each mythical motif becomes apprehensible through multiple codes—each of them affected, in turn, by the same vectors of transformation. If it is proper to the so-called "science of the concrete" to operate through overlapping layers in which each level serves as an organizing principle of a broader order, then it is hardly surprising that short circuits erupt at the level of the signifier. These short circuits, engendered by the superposition of heterogeneous planes, become durably inscribed in a singular regime of memory, established by symbolic thought through the repeated use of images as vehicles for the elements it seeks to retain. This "economy of memory" would thus function as the interpretive key to the internal incongruities of symbolic thought, for it refers to a form of knowledge whose content is never dissociated from its mode of transmission and recollection. In other words, the theory of memory implied in the workings of myth proves inseparable from the mode of transmission of the symbolic systems in which it is embedded—systems composed of concrete symbols whose form is embodied in both sound and meaning, and which cannot be disentangled from the elements they organize (cf. Salmon 2013, p. 159). Structure, far from being a fixed datum, is always the product of a prior state; and it is precisely in this sense that Lévi-Strauss equates symbolic thought with a bricolage fashioned from the residues of earlier states of the system. Every mythical production, then, presupposes a disfiguration: myth always leans on foreign narratives that it incorporates, transforms, or rejects, in order to allow the recognition of a variant as 'its own'—even if this comes at the cost of excluding certain traits or events effaced from the original version, as though the myth had to rid itself of parts of itself in order to reintegrate into a new horizon of meaning. Thus, finally, the "short-circuit function" of mythical thought—immanent to the very spirit of the myth, activated within a network where each term is inscribed according to a logic of heteroclite classification—comes to realization as a juxtaposition of incongruent planes, in which the overlap does not dissolve but rather intensifies the symbolic agency of the structure.

From the formulation of these questions—and, in a certain sense, also of their answers—Lévi-Strauss finds himself led, already in the *Finale*, to consider the possibility of thinking the "spirit of myth" (*1981, p.* 565) not as something that manifests itself in a complete or finalized version, but rather as something that demands a kind of prolonged incubation—a slow process requiring hours, days, months, or even years, until thought, unconsciously guided by the smallest (and why not say: infamous…) details, finally begins to glimpse the myth's contours. Within this horizon and from this perspective, Lévi-Strauss (ibid., p. 566) suggests two decisive propositions. The first is that there would exist a kind of non-orientable topology of myth, giving it a cylindrical configuration, such that its closed surface would preserve itself even as it continuously extends through time, beginning from one of its bases. The second, which follows from the first, is that myths are by nature endless, and mythologies always open-ended. Thus, any particular mythical domain can only ever be known in a state of becoming.

It is in this same sense that Lévi-Strauss (ibid., pp. 606–607) can assert that each version of a myth ultimately expresses the incidence of a double determinism: on one hand, its inscription within a chain of preceding versions or within a field of external versions; on the other, the lateral pressure of infrastructures, whose demands compel the modification of certain elements, imposing upon the system a reconfiguration that accommodates the differences produced by these external necessities. Now, the author observes, this opens two possibilities: either the infrastructure belongs to the inert order of nature and, as such, can generate nothing; or it is inscribed within the order of lived experience, where everything is in perpetual disequilibrium and tension — in which case, myths could not derive from that infrastructure by way of tautological causality. Rather, they would appear as provisional and situated responses to specific problems, arising from possible articulations and irreconcilable antagonisms, which the myth would then attempt to justify or conceal. In this sense, the content of myth is not anterior to it; rather, it is always and only posterior — the result of a first displacement. The myth does not originate from a fixed content: it is drawn toward it, as if by its own gravity. And in each particular case, in this contact with the real, it loses something of its apparent freedom — which, viewed from another angle, finally reveals itself as pure submission to its most intimate necessity.

In the backlight of all that has so far unfolded — less a line of reasoning than a field of resonance — it becomes possible to glimpse the gesture of mythical thought in its refusal: not as an act of direct opposition, but as one who sidesteps, one who, by veering off-course, unworks the totalizing ambitions of Western metaphysics. There is in it no claim to fixity: its mode is that of ceaseless recomposition, its ethics, the proliferation of versions, its topology, as we have intimated, is non-orientable — a torsion of worlds, a hinge-space in which direction dissolves. At this juncture, the path demands a bending of gaze: if until now we have wandered through the circuits of transfiguration — where myth operates as a machinic concatenation of accretion and shimmering — it is now time to attune ourselves to the reverberations of that regime within another field of thought, a field distinct, though not alien. It is a matter of following the thread that draws from the breath of myth toward a nascent image of thought — the one that surfaces in Memory Assemblages (2024), by Hilan Bensusan, where what mythical thought perhaps only murmured in passing through images is now uttered with philosophical precision: the past does not disappear by departing. It does not recede into distance by abandonment; it thickens. It insists. It gathers, like a spell, like a residue of excess that resists forgetting, reappearing in the form of impure assemblages. From this vantage, memory is no longer a vessel for what has been: it is an additive force, a generative density that transforms all that comes to be. As with myth, the form of thought described by Bensusan unfolds not by purity or separation, but by accumulation, contaminated derivations, and juxtapositions that ceaselessly reshape what once seemed sealed. This is not, here, the shallow mirroring of one regime in another — myth in philosophy, or vice versa — but the discerning of a point of entanglement, where thought itself becomes knotted within a logic of impurity, of discontinuous aggregation. A place where thinking no longer proceeds through totality, but through constellations that evade closure. In such a regime, the past no longer functions as a chronological before, but as a vector of enchantment — a force that braids and binds, drawing elements into an order that does not obey the linear, but composes along a plane of addition that bewilders time and bewitches thought. It is along this path — the path of memory intertwined with montage and transformation — that the investigation shall unfold, from the next section onward, into a quasi-metaphysics without essence, whose contours are always given as recombination,

and whose ontology is written — or rather, spliced — in a state of collage.

3. OF THE SPECULATIVE AND THE SPECTRAL

There is a central thesis in *Memory Assemblages* (2024) that beckons us with particular urgency here: the past does not vanish, for things always return in forms reasonably unlike what they once were. And that which is added to the past inevitably draws back what has already occurred — not as itself, but as spectre. Yet what is it that abides in the spectral? It is known, since Memory Assemblages, that spectres are always at odds with the metaphysical craving to seize things as matter and form — that ancient metaphysical mode which seeks solidity in presence and fixity in substance. Spectres, however, emerge not as residuals, but as insurgent graftings upon the past, older than the present itself. And in doing so, they deform, simultaneously, what metaphysics would claim as the real — under the sign of presence — and what might have been taken as the singularity of the now. In their drift, spectres erode the idea of a stable real; they unsettle the supposed uniqueness of the moment. There is, then, no plane of reality unmarked by spectral ingress — no layer of the real, however firm it may seem, that is not itself haunted by a spectral dimension.

This line of argument allows something else to shimmer through: the spectral not only haunts regimes of visibility — it silently founds them, issuing from a latency that never exhausts itself. Bound to the very conditions of possibility for what comes into presence, the spectre does not merely trouble what is given — it stretches space itself, causing time to bend beyond its presumed linearity. In this gesture, there is no detour, but rather an inscription: spectrality appears as that which ordinary transcendental critique must exclude — and yet, precisely in so doing, becomes disturbed by from within. Spectral presence, in this sense, is not an addition to the world, but its immanent fissure — a demand for justice imposed by a past that refuses pacification and weighs upon the present like a silent accusation. What returns is not merely memory, but tremor: the past insists because it knows the present, left to itself, veers toward the lie of stability. Thus — and this, perhaps, is the condensation — spectrality reshapes the return of the past not as mere repetition, but as bifurcated addition: two poles, mutually implicated, caught in a play without resolution, in a restless mirroring. On one side, the spectral's own diachrony summons that which exceeds the present, orienting it toward its own excess. On the other, the spectral reveals itself as a

transcendental index — not as formal totality, but as trace, as deviation, as remnant: a mark that does not close, but that proposes, in its incompletion, a mode of orientation. In this light, the past is not behind. It is the invisible stitching of history, a demand that traverses and compels. And the present — even when it resists — responds. It always responds. For the insistence of the past is not a choice. It is structure.

Faced with such a scene, one might say that spectres unveil not merely another economy of presence, but a mode of epistemic inscription of their own: they institute forms of knowledge that emerge through unstable accumulations — true memory assemblages, cuts, resonances, and reiterated attempts to recompose the real by routes other than those of classical representation. What might here be named "spectral realism" is not a doctrine of being, but an opening to the possibility that the real might present itself under the sign of interruption, variation, and expectancy. The spectral, in this sense, does not simply reveal what lies hidden; it displaces the very criteria of visibility, causing reality to offer itself only through lapses — never whole, never entirely absent. Under such a regime, the real is not composed like a mosaic (whose logic assumes the juxtaposition of intact fragments), nor like a puzzle (which projects, at its end, a completed image). Spectral additions do not aim toward a totality; they operate asymmetrically, as duplicities that never stabilize: they continue and erupt, prolong and rupture, compose and deconstruct within the same pulsation. This duplicity generates a strange order — an order without center — in which the former does not precede as cause, nor the latter follow as effect, but in which both are implicated in a weave resembling the slow time of geological strata, sedimenting ruins, spectres, remnants. In this register, time is not a line, but a porous accumulation, a thickness that folds back upon itself. Spectral additions are, then, the living signs of the failure of determination: they denounce, with silent insistence, the fragility of substances and the precarity of any belief in the permanence of whatever may be. For what they disturb — and this is the essential point — is precisely that tacit trust in the ontological stability of the world. The spectre, in appearing, undoes not only the object, but the very belief that sustains it.

The spectral, thus understood, is not an external anomaly to the field of experience, but its inner fold — a noise that exposes the fragility of the operations sustaining the belief in the world as given. It does not superimpose itself upon

reality as illusion or artifice; rather, it displaces it from within, causing its constitutive instability to flicker. In this light, reality appears as a thinned-out fabric of absences that persist, of incomplete presences that ceaselessly return in altered forms. Nothing is ever entirely there, and yet everything returns — not as the same, but as that which, having been, never ceased to insist. Within such a weave, there is no repose for the present. It is continually haunted by remnants that refuse pacification, by figures that exceed it both backward and forward. For the spectre does not belong to the past as a chronological category, but operates as a force that cleaves the now. This is why one might say that spectrality renders visible a logic of the in-between: between what was and what might have been, between what is and what already begins to fade. It sustains temporality as a kind of ongoing torsion, in which time does not pass, but twists, echoes, reemerges.

It is at this point that the spectre becomes also a kind of critical operator—not by presenting a defined content, but by demanding a reorientation of the very idea of determination. What, under a substantialist regime, would appear as a defect—the unfinished, the incomplete, the lacking—becomes, in the spectral register, precisely what makes the presence of the real possible. What is, is as flaw. What comes, comes as remainder. And this remainder is what imposes, not a closure of the world, but its insistent opening to the yet-not, to that which cannot be disposed of. Now, if the spectral addition does not constitute completion, it also cannot be reduced to a passive accumulation. It involves an ethics and a politics of attendance: a demand for justice, for listening, for attention to what, though unauthorized to remain, insists. For the spectral is not the other of the world—it is the other in the world. And it is this restless interiority that disturbs the course of things and forces thought to remake itself, without ever reaching rest. Thought, here, does not turn to what is, but to what escapes. And it is in this escape that its truth is given.

What becomes visible, then, is that the spectre does not belong to an order of exotic or peripheral phenomena: it is an index of a more fundamental operation, the one through which the world is articulated as lack, as interstice, as unfulfilled promise. Spectrality does not merely denounce the unfinished nature of a history, but the inevitably spectral character of all historicity. As Benjamin rightly intuited, each moment carries with it the image of wounded time—the spectre is this image, always displaced, which does not refer to the past as chronology, but

as active ruin, as interruption of the triumphant march of homogeneous and empty time.

In this sense, spectrality not only affects the episteme—it destabilizes its foundations. For every act of knowledge ultimately rests upon the desire to fix, to name, to order what presents itself. And it is precisely this gesture that the spectre frustrates. It appears as that which, upon announcing itself, undoes the conditions of its own capture. It speaks without being fully hearable, acts without being reducible to action. For this reason, the spectre is not an object: it is a force, a tension, a kind of excrescence of presence that continually shows its limits. If classical ontology presumed a sharp separation between being and nothingness, between presence and its absence, spectral logic dissolves this opposition. For the spectre is the presence of absence, it is what remains without being, what acts without being located. It inhabits the cracks of the visible and the nameable, and for this reason carries with it a potential for dismantling—not in the sense of destruction, but of opening: the spectral does not undo the world, it opens it to its own outside. It is in this outside that another politics, another justice, another sensitivity is outlined. Here, it is a matter of thinking a kind of topology of the incompatible: that which, unable to coexist with full determination, pursues it as its shadow. For the spectral is not incompatible with the real—it is its necessary excess. It indicates that every regime of world ordering leaves something out that, though excluded, does not disappear. This "remainder" is not external: it is intimate, structuring, and that is why it returns. It returns not as the reappearance of the same, but as the insistence of a debt that the present cannot settle. In spectrality, there is an ethical call that precedes morality: an appeal to responsibility before what cannot be fully assumed, but which, even so, demands a response.

Thus, spectrality demands a thought that knows how to dwell in the in-between: neither nostalgic restitution nor totalizing redemption, but active listening to that which, in its opacity, demands continuity. It is no accident that indigenous cosmologies, for example, never radically separate the living from the dead, the visible from the invisible, the actual from the virtual. In them, the world is inhabited by multiple presences, many of which cannot be seen but command respect. Spirits, enchanteds, ancestors, forces of the forest—these figures are not remnants of an outdated belief, but specific modes of inscription of the spectral

as a constitutive part of the real. Indigenous thought, in this regard, may have always known what Western metaphysics is only now beginning to glimpse: that the real is made of presences that cannot be saturated, that every form contains a trace, that every life coexists with its death.

The spectre, then, is not just what returns: it is what forces us to rethink what it means to be. Be where? In what time? With whom? And to whom must we listen, even when what speaks does so from silence? In the finest fold of this fabric, it is Derrida (1993, p.163) who tells us: "a ghost never dies, it is always to come, it returns." The spectre, far from being a localized event, is a structure—or rather, it is the very condition of possibility and impossibility of any structure. In *Spectres de Marx* (1993), the ghost is not a figure of illusion or deception, but that which haunts every coming present. The spectral, in Derrida, is not limited to a thematization of death or the past: it is the way in which time unravels as a continuous line and reveals itself as interval, delay, anticipation, and return.

Spectrality, in this sense, is the other of time—but also its beating heart. For every present is founded upon exclusions, upon unspoken things, upon instituting silences that, though invisible, never cease to operate. The spectre is the name of this restless operation. This is why Derrida speaks of an ontology of the haunted present—an ontology that can no longer claim stability, fullness, or self-identity. Being, here, is no longer defined as pure presence, but as presence *différée*, always already marked by that which is not itself. The spectre is the figure that carries within it this différance, this twisted time, this space that is never whole, this meaning that never closes. But spectrality, in Derrida, is not just a wounded ontology: it is also a politics. There are spectres because there are promises unfulfilled. There is return because there is debt. What returns is not the past as such, but that which was silenced, forgotten, erased in the past—and which demands justice. *Hauntology*, in this sense, is not nostalgia nor a mystical delirium, but a radical critique of the metaphysics of presence, the theology of completeness, and the economy of progress. Spectrality destabilizes the triumphant course of history, opening space for the defeated, for those who could not speak, for those who continue waiting to be heard. Therefore, it is not about exorcising the spectre, but learning to listen to it—and, more than that, responding to its call. For every spectrality is an interrogation. It demands from us not knowledge, but listening; not dominion, but hospitality. And this hospitality

is always a risk: the spectre may destroy the house. But perhaps this is precisely what is asked of us—not to preserve the foundations, but to let them tremble. For if there is justice, it will come, as Derrida says, *toujours à venir*. And this coming is never pure: it is spectral, it comes with remains, with traces, with ruins. This is why thinking the spectre is, in the end, thinking what still has no place. It is keeping time open to what escapes its chronology. It is accepting that the real is not given whole, that the world is inhabited by forces that cannot be disposed of. And that these forces—of the dead, of the defeated, of the forgotten, of unfulfilled promises—are not obstacles to thought: they are its deepest origin. Thought begins there, where the world fails to close itself.

4. MYTH AND SPECTRALITY AS OPERATORS OF ONTOLOGICAL OPENING

There is a subterranean insistence that unites the spectre and the myth: both do not exhaust themselves in what they show, both exceed the image of themselves. Neither offers itself as a totality—and perhaps it is precisely at this point that they intersect most profoundly: in the way they simultaneously refuse completeness and extinction. If the spectre returns ceaselessly, never coinciding with itself, it is because it operates according to a logic of addition that never closes meaning, only multiplies it. The myth, in turn, by stating without enunciating a foundation, by recomposing without stabilizing an origin, gives narrative form to the same structure of the between, to the same logic of deferred recurrence. It is in this fold, in this speculative twist, that Lévi-Strauss's mythology finds its field of spectral reverberation. It is not a matter of saying that myths are haunted, nor that spectres are mythological—but of recognizing that both operate within a regime of animated discontinuity, where meaning does not settle but resonates. The notion that myth offers "no metaphysical complacency" resonates here as a confession of the impossibility of ontological repose: myth does not console, it wounds. It does not say "the origin is here"; it asserts: "what is believed to be the origin is merely a point of reversal within a broader circuit of variations." The spectre, in turn, says the same—but it does so in silence. It appears where the origin fails, where the present unravels, where the timeline folds upon its own trace. In both cases, there is a knowledge that is not of the domain but of listening. Listening to the spectre is hearing what was excluded, what was left behind and yet still demands a response. Listening to the myth is realizing that it never says

only what it says—because its structure is composed of past voices, forgotten fragments, imperfect translations that never cease circulating. There is no original version of the myth, just as there is no original spectre. Both are echoes of echoes, versions of versions, traces of presences that never fully settled.

If spectres, as Bensusan reminds us, operate through addition, then every myth, in its very form, becomes a kind of spectrality woven with structure. For it accumulates residues, embodies layers of memory, carrying with it what cannot be discarded without something being lost from the world. The "science of the concrete," as Lévi-Strauss envisioned it, was nothing more than an exercise in bricolage with the remnants of the sensible, a composition from fragments of worlds that no longer exist as wholes, but that still vibrate in their narrative folds. In this sense, all mythic thought is thought with spectres. It does not thematize them—it carries them, as one walks without knowing if one is accompanied. In this intertwining, there is a profound ethical implication: both the myth and the spectre teach us that thought is only possible because there are ruins. To think is not to build on solid ground, but on unstable terrain, inhabited by absences that still hurt, by silences that still speak. The function of the myth, in this register, is not to explain the world, but to keep it in its openness. The function of the spectre, in turn, is not to scare, but to remind—to remind that what was forgotten, erased, or lost continues to be inscribed on the margins of presence.

When Lévi-Strauss proposes that myth operates through series of transformations—substitutions, inversions, transpositions—he is already stating that there is no final term, no definitive version. Each narrative is an attempt to respond to something that escapes, to give provisional form to an absence that persists. The same can be said of spectrality: there is no return without displacement, no memory without contamination. The spectre does not return the same—it returns as difference, as another way of inscribing the past into the present. At this point, it becomes possible to see that the temporality they both establish is neither linear nor cyclical. It is, as Bensusan would say, a diacrony of addition: a time that does not pass, but accumulates; a time that does not advance, but entangles. Myths do not belong to the past; they belong to the field of incessant updating—and that is why they speak. They speak because they never cease to be rewritten, re-enacted, reconfigured. And so do the spectres: they do not belong to a dead time, but to the time of what is to come. They are pasts that refuse to disappear, and because of that, they shape the future.

There is something profoundly political in this gesture. Because myth, like the spectre, insists on behalf of what was left out, of what found no place in the hegemonic narrative of the real. It refuses the closure of history, refuses the final period. And this refusal is not rhetorical, but ontological. The world is not closed. What we call reality is merely what has not yet been undone by the returning presences. And to return, here, does not mean to repeat: it means to reopen time. It means allowing what was silenced to finally be heard, even if by other mouths, in other bodies, under other forms. Myth, then, is not the memory of a people: it is the operation by which the past resurges as a force of composition. And the spectre is not a trace of what died: it is the form by which what was denied continues to vibrate within the order of the sensible. To think between Lévi-Strauss and Bensusan is to recognize that there is no stability of the real without its flaws. That the world is only world because it contains zones of shadow, zones of contamination, zones of non-closure. The truth, if there is any, may be this: the world lives only because it remains incomplete. Because, somewhere, there still remains the myth that has not been told, the spectre that has not been heard, the meaning that has yet to appear.

It is in this persistent unfinishedness — in this refusal of closure that is neither nostalgia nor apocalypse — that myth and spectre recognize each other, as two distinct modes of sustaining the indeterminacy of the world. Both carry with them the cipher of an unresolved time, the inscription of an excess that never submits to completeness. The myth transforms this excess into a translucent narrative, which speaks through transfiguration, stumbling, displacement; the spectre, in turn, settles as an internal fracture, as a fold or reentrance of presence within itself. In each case, what is revealed is not the pure presence of something, but the structure of its absence — that which is there as what is missing, as what insists. Perhaps this is why every myth, in order to function, must forget. It must eliminate certain traces, omit certain versions, erase certain gestures — but it does not do so to fix a truth, but so that something of meaning can circulate again, in another form, in another story. The myth, like the spectre, selects. But its selection does not aim to exclude, only to make the recomposition of the whole possible. Just as every spectrality is always a form of assembly, every myth is an operation of addition that reorganizes the residues. It produces meaning not through purification, but through contamination: each new version is impure,

loaded with remnants that it cannot absorb entirely. It is this impurity, this incompleteness, that keeps it alive. This is why Lévi-Strauss could say that myths have no end. Their cylindrical structure — which returns upon itself while extending indefinitely — should not be understood as an abstract figure, but as a real operation of thought. The myth is what repeats with variation, what re-inscribes itself always from a new point of view, a new event, a new infrastructure. It does not operate by cause, but by juxtaposition; not by principle, but by effect. And it is exactly in this way that the spectre also moves: it does not emerge from a precise place, it does not return for a specific reason — it returns because there is still a debt, an opening, an unsettled debt between the world and its own consistency.

What this demands, then, is a thought that abandons the belief in the given and opens itself to an ontology of the unfinished. A thought that does not seek to reduce the multiple to the one, but knows how to dwell in the deviation as its very ground. Myth, in this sense, is not a knowledge about things, but a knowledge that things carry within their own instability. The spectre, for its part, does not speak of what happened — it reveals what is missing. Both point, each in its own way, to an ontology of irreducible difference, where the real only appears as that which is yet to be composed.

The past, in this formulation, is not something that moves away, but something that positions itself — and it does so always in relation to the place from which it is enunciated. The myth, then, is not the past itself, but a way of locating the past in the present. It installs multiple, divergent, contradictory pasts, which coexist not through harmony, but through unstable juxtaposition. Just like spectres, myths do not say "what was," but "what still speaks of what was." They operate by deification: they stage pasts that only make sense from a certain here, a certain now, a certain body. Hence, the myth is also body. Narrative body, vocal body, collective body. It does not exist outside of enunciation, it does not exist outside the context in which it is actualized. It is a language in a state of metamorphosis, a syntax that escapes the logic of the sign. The spectre, too, is not an entity: it is effect, it is vibration, it is echo. It is what remains of an inscription, what is left of a gesture. And that is precisely why both, myth and spectre, cannot be reduced to a regime of full presence. They require another listening, another sensitivity, another way of being in the world.

This form might approach what indigenous cosmologies describe as enchantment. Not a magical state, but an ontological disposition: the recognition that the world is inhabited by presences that cannot be explained, but that touch us. Spirits, ancestors, fragments of time, residues of speech — all of this makes up a field of sensitivity that does not separate the living from the dead, the natural from the supernatural, the human from the more-than-human. Spectrality, in this horizon, is not an exception: it is a condition of existence. The myth, in this context, is not invention: it is a way of knowing. Perhaps that is why, at the end of his immersion in the *Mythologiques*, Lévi-Strauss confessed that what remained to him was not a substance, but a singularity — an intensive point in a network of mobile relations. The self dissolved before the transindividual force of myths, before the incessant multiplication of versions, before the infinite proliferation of combinations. The myth, like the spectre, depersonalizes: it removes the self from its centrality and repositions it in a field of forces where no identity can be fully sustained, where no name is definitive. Whoever speaks a myth speaks for others — for those who spoke before, for those who will speak after. They speak for spectres.

This passage touches on the deep connection between myth, spectrality, and a particular form of ethics — one that involves listening, hospitality, and embracing the unfinished. It emphasizes that both the myth and the spectre serve as ways to maintain reality in a state of openness, where the past isn't fixed or concluded but continually returns, transforming and reworking itself. It's an approach that challenges conventional ideas of presence, completeness, and finality, proposing instead an ongoing process of becoming, of unfinished stories, and of unresolved histories that still demand attention and re-interpretation. This framing of myth and spectrality as "technologies of non-disappearance" invites a new way of thinking about the world, where the past isn't a closed chapter but an ever-returning force, one that resists being forgotten and insists on being heard again.

5. CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion, one can say memory, beyond being an archive, is a forest. Not the one where we get lost, but the one that loses us — for in it, nothing is found according to the logic of the same, of the center, of return. What Hilan

Bensusan proposes, when reflecting on assemblies of memory, is an ontological restitution of the multiple as a regime of reality: to remember is not to return to what was, but to assemble what may be between the fragments of composed times. This is why myths, these restless narratives, appear not as documents of a distant past, but as active operators of cosmopolitan construction. When we reconsider Lévi-Strauss's *Mythologiques* through this lens, we cease to see them as an archaeology of invariant structures and begin to hear them as zones of co-appearance between worlds that do not recognize each other, but intersect. The myth does not seek to explain — it seeks to proliferate, to open clearings for what insists outside the regime of a logic of presence.

Nothing is more alien to the myth than the exception. It does not begin, it does not culminate, it does not consecrate. On the contrary, it slides, bends, varies, recombines. Each version of a myth is a reenactment that is never identical to itself, not because it has lost the original, but because it never intended to have it. In this sense, the myth is the philosophy of others — not because it thinks less, but because it thinks differently: not through the concept that distinguishes, but through the image it summons, the name that dances, the animal that speaks. This Amerindian philosophy in the state of narration, as conceived by Lévi-Strauss and reinscribed by Bensusan, does not operate according to the opposition between symbol and reality, but according to a logic of proximity, of translation, and of superposition. In it, thought is a continuous metamorphosis: a jaguar becoming a shaman, an ancestor sinking into the river, a star bleeding.

The myth, in this sense, does not explain itself through structure, but through approximation — like a network of kinships that does not resolve into genealogy, but dissolves into contagion. For this reason, its rationality does not fit the form of argument. It pulses in the way certain memories organize themselves, either by accident or by affinity, and compose a field of legibility that is always unstable, always incomplete. Each myth is an assembly of recollections, of remnants, of discordant voices that unite not through coherence, but through temporary cohabitation. The myth does not preserve: it injects life into time. It summons pasts to rearrange themselves, not as mirrors, but as forests that speak to one another through cracks, through whistles, through murmurs. Perhaps this is what the myth teaches us about reality: that there is not one world, but many, and that what we call "the real" is merely a fragile zone of intersection between worlds that do not understand each other, but affect one another. To think, in this

context, is not to order chaos, but to make it possible for chaos to communicate with itself — for a water snake to speak with a stone fallen from the sky, for a dead man to dream of the mouth of an anteater. The rationality of the myth is not a logic of identity, but a politics of relation: it does not organize the data of the world, it multiplies the ways of inhabiting what cannot be reduced. And perhaps, for this reason, the myth is, above all, an ethics — a way of living among memories that do not belong to us, with others who are not ours, in worlds that were not made for us.

Reading Lévi-Strauss with Bensusan is to rediscover the myth as a field of ontological insurgency. Not a fiction, not a sacred narrative, but a system of assembling the sensible that never closes, because its function is not to signify, but to compose. To compose worlds, memories, materials. To think with myths is to think against origin and against end. It is to affirm that everything that lives is a remainder — and that every remainder, if listened to carefully, is capable of restarting the world.

leifgrunewald@gmail.com

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